

**THE POLITICS OF SEXUALITY IN THE STORY OF KING DAVID**

by  
Erin E. Fleming

A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland  
October 2013

© 2013 Erin E. Fleming  
All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

Among the stories surrounding the most famous of biblical kings—David—are a number of episodes that contain sexual components. Aspects of the sexual can be found especially in the narratives of David's reign but also to a certain extent in the accounts of his rise to power and the succession of his son Solomon. Though David is not always directly involved, the episodes involving sexuality are closely intertwined with the story of David's kingship over Israel and Judah. The sustained recurrence of sexual episodes surrounding David suggests that sexuality should be considered a literary motif in the David story found in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2.

In this thesis, I provide a systematic treatment of sexuality in the narratives of David's rise to power, his reign, and Solomon's succession as presented in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2. Specifically, I focus on sexuality and kingship by examining how sexuality relates to royal ideology and political pragmatism in the narratives surrounding the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. This study considers how the sexual episodes in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 function within the overall narrative of David and what they might suggest about cultural conceptions of gender, sexuality, and kingship in ancient Israel and Judah within their ancient Near Eastern cultural context.

From my analysis of the sexuality theme in the David Narrative, it appears that the motif of sexuality largely functions as a literary device for pro-David writers in their composition of a narrative supportive of the founding king of the Judahite dynasty. Sex, when assumed and not central to the narrative, is licit and helps to justify David's kingship over Israel, as seen in the stories surrounding David's early marriages. In

contrast, when sex does appear in the David Narrative, either in characters' discourse or explicitly narrated, it is illicit and irregular. Sex often represents a political threat that provokes a decisive response but also explains ruptured interpersonal relations with important political fallout.

Advisor:	Theodore J. Lewis
Second Reader:	P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.
Committee Chair:	Toby Ditz
Readers:	Paul Delnero Daniel E. Fleming Esther J. Hamori

*For my parents*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to be able to express my gratitude to the numerous people whose support and guidance helped me to complete this dissertation. My advisor Theodore Lewis devoted much time and effort to this project, patiently guiding me from the first inchoate drafts to the final product, and provided much encouragement along the way. I have significantly benefited from his expertise and wisdom, and I hope someday to emulate the high bar he sets for both scholarship and teaching. Kyle McCarter provided comments and suggestions to several chapter drafts. His own masterful works on the books of Samuel will continue to be an inspiration, and I appreciate the vast amount I learned from him while at Hopkins. Paul Delnero gave helpful advice and suggestions throughout the dissertation process, and I am also greatly indebted to him for the superb Assyriological training I received during coursework. Daniel Fleming of New York University went above and beyond the duties required of a reader, supporting the project from its inception and giving detailed comments for several early chapter drafts. The present work benefited considerably from his questions and suggestions. Esther Hamori of Union Theological Seminary provided constructive suggestions during the defense, and I am also very grateful for the preparation and encouragement she gave me as a master's student. Finally, I would like to thank Toby Ditz for chairing my defense and for her kind feedback.

Outside of my committee, I am also thankful to professors Betsy Bryan and Richard Jasnow for their comments and suggestions on particular sections. Special

thanks also go to Julie Reiser for initiating and teaching the dissertation writing seminar at JHU, which was a tremendous help to me.

Throughout my time at Hopkins, I have greatly appreciated the camaraderie of my classmates in the department of Near Eastern Studies and feel very fortunate to have been surrounded by such promising young scholars and wonderful colleagues. I would especially like to thank the members of my dissertation writing group, Heather Parker and Jaime Waters. Your discussions and critiques, boundless support and encouragement, and gentle accountability have been invaluable. To Heather in particular I am immensely grateful for turning a potentially very isolating experience into one shared with a colleague and dear friend. I am also very thankful for the support of and conversations with Tiffany Earley-Spadoni, Heath Dewrell, and Andrew Knapp.

I am very grateful to Krieger School of Arts and Sciences for the funding I received through the Dean's Teaching Fellowship during the Spring of 2012. I had a wonderful group of students, both in my course "The Politics of Sexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East" and in the Hebrew reading course on 2 Samuel I taught the same semester. I am thankful to my students for their enthusiasm and generosity of spirit as well as for their insightful thoughts and questions, which helped shape my own ideas.

I would like to thank my department's academic coordinators Glenda Hogan and Vonnie Wild for their assistance and consistent good humor during my years at Hopkins. Also, I would be remiss not to mention the great staff of Milton S. Eisenhower Library, particularly reference librarian Don Juedes and the impressively efficient people at the Interlibrary Loan/Eisenhower Express who made my life much easier.

I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the previous teachers whose inspiration and guidance helped prepare me for my studies at Hopkins. At Union Theological Seminary, I studied with remarkable scholars who contributed to my professional development. David Carr first introduced me to the critical study of the Hebrew Bible, encouraged me to pursue further studies in the field, and provided the solid preparation needed for me to do so. The late Edwina Wright made the biblical languages accessible and approachable. At Texas A&M University, outstanding English literature faculty Jerome Loving, the late Douglas Brooks, and especially Victoria Rosner honed my critical thinking skills, introduced me to gender and sexuality studies, and encouraged me to pursue graduate school. Additionally, I would like to thank my high school English and humanities teacher Linda Buteyn for providing me with a solid foundation in critical writing. I am also extremely grateful to the Rev. Jack Buteyn, whose ministry first sparked my interest in the Bible as a child, and to the Rev. Erik Buteyn for encouraging me to go to seminary.

I am incredibly grateful for the love, support, and encouragement I received from family and friends throughout this process. My parents Jerry and Becky Fleming, to whom this dissertation is dedicated, instilled in me both the importance of education and the belief that anything was possible, and my mom even moved to Baltimore for a semester to take care of my daughter while I was teaching. They and my brother Scott have always cheered me on, and I truly would never have made it to this point without their support. Both of my grandmothers, Vivian Leaton and the late Frances Fletcher, made generous financial contributions toward my education so that I would have better opportunities than they were given. My mother-in-law Renate Kotze provided

innumerable hours of child-care, and without her help it would have been impossible to complete my dissertation. My aunt Kim Gordon also traveled from Texas to give extra help with child care during the final stages of writing. I am forever grateful for my precious two year-old daughter Rachel, who has been a constant reminder of what is really important and inspired me to finish so that I can “play, play, play” with her! Finally, my amazing husband Werner Kotze has given me unconditional love and support throughout this long and often arduous journey. Throughout it all, he has been my champion, coach, and friend. Words cannot adequately express my gratitude to him, and I look forward to beginning a new phase in our lives together.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xi
 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	 1
1.1. Terminology.....	3
1.1.1 Sexuality.....	3
1.1.2 The David Narrative: 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2.....	5
1.2. Sexuality in the David Narrative.....	8
 CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND METHODOLOGY.....	 11
2.1. Introduction.....	11
2.2. The David Narrative within the Deuteronomistic History.....	16
2.3. Historical-Critical Approaches to the David Narrative.....	30
2.4. Literary-Critical Approaches to the David Narrative.....	47
2.5. Feminist Biblical Criticism and the David Narrative.....	51
2.6. Previous Discussions of Sex and the David Narrative.....	54
2.7. Conclusion.....	62
 CHAPTER 3: ASSUMPTIONS AND ALLIANCES, PART 1: DAVID’S MARRIAGES.....	 63
3.1. Introduction.....	63
3.2. Saul’s Daughters.....	66
3.2.1 Merab: 1 Samuel 18:17-19.....	66
3.2.2 Michal: 1 Samuel 18:20-29, 19:11-17, 25:44; 2 Samuel 3:12-16, 6:23, 21:1-14.....	70
3.3. Women of Judah.....	89
3.3.1 Abigail: 1 Samuel 25.....	90
3.3.2 Ahinoam: 1 Samuel 25:44.....	102
3.3.3 Ahinoam and Abigail: 1 Samuel 30; 2 Samuel 2:1-4.....	104
3.4. Wives of the King.....	107

3.4.1. Lists of David's Sons: 2 Samuel 3:2-5, 5:13-16.....	107
3.4.2 Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25; 1 Kings 1:11-31.....	109
3.5. Conclusion.....	122
CHAPTER 4: ASSUMPTIONS AND ALLIANCES, PART 2: DAVID AND JONATHAN.....	124
4.1 Introduction.....	124
4.2. Jonathan and David before "David and Jonathan": 1 Samuel 13-17.....	132
4.3. David and Jonathan Meet: 1 Samuel 17:57-18:1-5.....	136
4.4. Jonathan Intercedes for David: 1 Samuel 19:1-7.....	144
4.5. Jonathan Helps David Escape: 1 Samuel 20.....	152
4.6. Final Meeting: 1 Samuel 23:16-18.....	159
4.7. David's Lament: 2 Samuel 1:26.....	162
4.8 Conclusion.....	172
CHAPTER 5: ACCUSATIONS OF SEXUAL IMPROPRIETY.....	174
5.1. Introduction.....	174
5.2. Ishba'al against Abner: 2 Samuel 3:6-11.....	176
5.3 Michal against David: 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23.....	190
5.4. Solomon against Adonijah: 1 Kings 2:13-25.....	203
5.5. Conclusion.....	213
CHAPTER 6: EXPLICIT ENCOUNTERS.....	214
6.1. Introduction.....	214
6.2 Absalom and David's <i>Pīlagšīm</i> : 2 Samuel 16:20-23.....	217
6.3. Amnon and Tamar: 2 Samuel 13:1-22.....	232
6.4. David and Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25.....	261
6.5. Under Yahweh's Curse.....	289
6.6. David and Abishag: 1 Kings 1:1-4.....	294
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	298
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	305

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4QSam <sup>a</sup>	Samuel manuscripts from Qumran Cave IV
<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Ed. David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1992.
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Ed. Ignace J. Gelb, et al. Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-.
<i>CANE</i>	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . Ed. Jack M. Sasson. 4 vols. New York: Scribner, 1995.
<i>CoS</i>	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Ed. William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
Dtr	Deuteronomist
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner. Rev. ed. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HDR	History of David's Rise
JPS	<i>Jewish Publication Society Hebrew-English Tanakh</i>
KTU	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits. Part 1: Transkription</i> . Eds. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. <i>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</i> 24/1. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1976.
LXX	Septuagint
LXX <sup>B</sup>	Codex Vaticanus
LXX <sup>L</sup>	Lucianic manuscripts
mss	manuscript

NAS	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJ	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OL	Old Latin translations
SN	Succession Narrative
Syr	Syriac or Peshitta
Targ	Targum Jonathan
Vulg	Vulgate

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Together the biblical books of Samuel and Kings present an account of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah from nascence to exile. Among the stories surrounding the most famous of biblical kings—David—are a number of episodes that contain sexual components. Aspects of the sexual can be found especially in the narratives of David's reign but also to a certain extent in the accounts of his rise to power and the succession of his son Solomon. Though David is not always directly involved, the episodes involving sexuality are closely intertwined with the story of David's kingship over Israel and Judah. The sustained recurrence of sexual episodes surrounding David suggests that sexuality should be considered a literary motif in the David story found in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2.

Due to the importance of engendering progeny for kings, references to sex in an account about the founder of a royal dynasty might seem predictable, and David marks the first depiction of a successful succession through a descendant of the king in the Hebrew Bible. However, the sexuality motif in narratives about David shows little connection to producing offspring. Rather, sexuality often functions in the narratives about David as a device for asserting political power or ascertaining political loyalty. Sexual access to particular women carries considerable political significance, sexual competition results in political infighting, and reports of illicit sex are utilized as a means of discrediting royal rivals. Thus there seems to be a certain "politics of sexuality" in the story of King David.

In marked contrast to the stories of David, neither the narratives about the kingship of Saul before David is introduced nor the accounts of the subsequent kings of Israel and Judah contain sexual elements. This distinction is striking, especially since the David story is embedded within the large narrative complex from Joshua through 2 Kings called the Deuteronomistic History, which scholarly consensus regards as a literary unit that was subjected to a similar editorial process.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the account of David's reign in 1 Chronicles does not include any episodes involving or alluding to sex.<sup>2</sup> Since the Chronicler often draws on material in the books of Samuel and Kings, this is a significant omission. It seems, then, that the focus on sexuality in the Hebrew Bible's presentation of the political history of the states of Israel and Judah is limited to the Deuteronomistic narratives in the books of Samuel surrounding David. In response to this phenomenon, I will investigate the particular function the motif of sexuality has for the David narrative.

In this thesis, I provide a systematic treatment of sexuality in the narratives of David's rise to power, his reign, and Solomon's succession as presented in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2. This analysis will explore the intersection of sexuality and political relationships in the stories about David, investigating how sexuality functions politically as well as how political agendas are intertwined with issues of sexuality. Specifically, I focus on sexuality and kingship by examining how sexuality relates to royal ideology and political pragmatism in the narratives surrounding the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. This study considers how the sexual episodes in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 function within the overall narrative of David and what they might suggest about cultural

---

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the Deuteronomistic History, see section 2.2.

<sup>2</sup> However, 1 Chronicles names some of David's wives and lists sons born to him (1 Chron 3:1-9; 14:3-7; 15:29).

conceptions of gender, sexuality, and kingship in ancient Israel and Judah within their ancient Near Eastern cultural context. My approach to the text will combine detailed textual analysis, the utilization of contemporary theories of gender and sexuality, and an awareness of the text's ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu in order to examine the literary function of sexuality in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2.

## ***1.1. Terminology***

### ***1.1.1. Sexuality***

“Sexuality” is often used in common parlance to signify a person's sexual orientation or preference, but this is not what I intend to communicate when applying this term to biblical narrative.<sup>3</sup> Rather, my use of the term sexuality is in keeping with its broader and more basic meaning of “the quality of being sexual,” which pertains to sexual activity as well as sexual feelings and expression.<sup>4</sup> Regarding the David Narrative, I use the term sexuality to indicate all aspects of the stories about David that are related to the sexual. This includes stories in which sexual activity is specifically said to occur but also narratives whose relationship to sex is more implicit, such as references to sex within characters' discourse. In this study, marriage also falls under my definition of sexuality. Though marriage is primarily a social institution, it is characteristically based on a sexual union. Whether or not references to sexual activity are included,

---

<sup>3</sup> The term sexuality is sometimes used this way when David's relationship to Jonathan is discussed, but the general consensus is that modern concepts of sexual orientation are not appropriate categories for the ancient Near Eastern world. See section 4.1 for further discussion.

<sup>4</sup> So the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. The *OED* defines sexuality more fully as “the quality of being sexual or possessing sex;” “sexual nature, instinct, or feelings; the possession or expression of these;” and “a person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which he or she is typically attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual; sexual orientation.” In its more condensed form, Oxford defines sexuality as the “capacity for sexual feelings” with the sub-meanings of “a person's sexual orientation or preference” and “sexual activity.” *Merriam-Webster's* full definition reads “the quality or state of being sexual,” such as “the condition of having sex;” “sexual activity” or “the expression of sexual receptivity or interest especially when excessive.”

sexual relations between David and his wives are assumed in the narrative.<sup>5</sup> By using “sexuality” as an umbrella term to cover all episodes in the story of King David with sexual components, however, I do not wish to imply that I regard them all as equivalent. On the contrary, the differences in how sexuality is presented among these episodes constitute a major organizing principle of my study. However, in choosing the term “sexuality” I do intend to communicate that I regard the stories containing sexual elements in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 as related, at least thematically, to the figure of David.

In his well-known *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault regards sexuality as “an especially dense transfer point for relations of power.”<sup>6</sup> He goes on to say, “Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.”<sup>7</sup> If Foucault’s statement is correct, sexuality would presumably also be very useful for literary representations of power relations as the episodes involving sexuality in the story of King David repeatedly demonstrate. Each episode discussed in this study, whether an account of a marriage negotiation or a sordid tale of adultery or rape, relates to relations of power not only between the sexual/sexualized couples, but especially between other important political actors who maneuver and strategize in varied ways to achieve their goals. The

---

<sup>5</sup> David is mentioned as fathering children by each of his wives who appears as a narrative character except Michal. Though Michal does not bear David children (2 Sam 6:23), this fact is specifically stated, which indicates that from the narrative’s perspective, progeny, and therefore sexual relations, are expected.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction (The Will to Knowledge)* (trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Random House, 1990; orig. French ed. 1976), 103.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Here Foucault is primarily talking in terms of recent history, but in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* he attempts to trace modern attitudes about sex to Greek and Roman antecedents.



episodes involving sexuality in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 are presented as having important political ramifications affecting the balance of power in Israel and Judah and also contribute significantly to the narrative portrait of King David.

### ***1.1.2. The David Narrative: 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2***

Throughout this study I will refer to the story of David found in 1 Samuel 16 through 1 Kings 2 as the “David Narrative.” Even though Saul is still king of Israel, once David is introduced in 1 Samuel 16 the focus of the narrative shifts decidedly to him. As I will discuss in the following history of scholarship chapter, most biblical scholars view the story of David in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 as the combination of more than one source through a significant editorial and redactional process. By using the term David Narrative, I am not challenging the idea that 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 is made up of disparate sources, nor do I wish to suggest that there is no connection between the story of David and the material about Saul that precedes it (1 Sam 9-15). I simply claim that 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 tells a full story of the rise, reign, death, and succession of King David and on purely literary grounds can be considered a complete narrative.

#### *Content of the David Narrative*

1 Samuel 16-2 Samuel 5:5 recounts David’s unlikely ascent to kingship over Judah and then Israel.<sup>8</sup> A younger son of a Bethlehemite named Jesse, David rises to prominence as part of the Benjaminite king Saul’s entourage, even becoming the leader of Saul’s warriors (1 Sam 16-18). Soon, however, Saul becomes suspicious of David’s power and popularity. He plots to have him killed, but David repeatedly escapes Saul’s attempts on his life with the help of Saul’s children Jonathan and Michal (1 Sam 18-20).

---

<sup>8</sup> This pericope is usually called the “History of David’s Rise;” see further discussion in section 2.3.

David then roams the Judean wilderness as a fugitive from Saul, who continues to make attempts at killing him. While he is on the run, David manages to attract an army of other disenfranchised men and to make beneficial connections throughout the Negev (1 Sam 21-26). David also enters the service of the Philistine Achish of Gath (1 Sam 27-28:2; 29). After Saul is killed in battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 31), David is anointed king over Judah (2 Sam 2:4). He then goes to war with Saul's successor Ishba'al<sup>9</sup> until the latter's assassination, at which point the elders of Israel seek out David and anoint him as king over Israel (2 Sam 2:8-5:5).

At this point, the David Narrative turns to the events during David's reign.<sup>10</sup> David conquers the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, making it his new capital, and he receives an oracle of an everlasting dynasty (2 Sam 5-7). He also has significant military successes against neighboring polities—Philistia, Aram, Moab, Ammon, and Edom—and provides for Saul's remaining descendant, Jonathan's son Meribba'al (2 Sam 8-9).<sup>11</sup> At this point, David's reign appears to be incredibly successful, but it is soon faced with serious challenges. During a siege against the Ammonite capital, David, still in Jerusalem, commits adultery with Bathsheba while her husband Uriah is away at battle. David has Uriah murdered and marries Bathsheba to cover up the adulterous pregnancy, and as a result of these offenses David is cursed by Yahweh (2 Sam 11-12). After this,

---

<sup>9</sup> The MT of Samuel consistently gives the name of Saul's son as *'iš-bōšet* "man of shame," while Chronicles gives his name as *'ešba'al* (1 Chr 8:33; 9:39). Scholars have long regarded *bōšet* in Samuel as a later scribal emendation making euphemistic substitution for the deity Ba'al. However, see the argument by Kyle McCarter that in Hebrew *ba'al* can also be a generic term for "lord," meaning in this case Yahweh. See discussion in McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 9; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980), 85-87.

<sup>10</sup> This section is often referred to as the "Succession Narrative;" see further discussion in section 2.3.

<sup>11</sup> Similar to the situation with Ishba'al's name, Meribba'al is consistently given in the MT and most LXX mss as *mēpībōšet*. See discussion by McCarter, *II Samuel*, 124-125; 128.

David's son Absalom leads a revolt to depose his father (2 Sam 13-19). Absalom's revolt is partially successful,<sup>12</sup> though David is ultimately victorious. Immediately after David is reinstated as king, he must quell another revolt by a northern faction (2 Sam 20).

The last four chapters of 2 Samuel (2 Sam 21-24) contain assorted literature about David and are usually regarded as a kind of addendum to the larger narrative in 1-2 Samuel. These pieces include story in which David has seven heirs of Saul executed to counter a famine (2 Sam 21:1-14); battle anecdotes about David and his men (2 Sam 21:15-22); a psalm of Thanksgiving spoken by David (2 Sam 22//Ps 18); another poem said to be last words of David (2 Sam 23:1-7); stories and names of the Three and the Thirty, David's elite fighting force (2 Sam 23:8-39); and a story which recounts Yahweh's punishment of David and his kingdom in response to David's taking a census (2 Sam 24).

The narrative of Solomon's succession found in 1 Kings 1-2 is usually considered to belong literarily with the material that precedes it describing David's reign rather than what follows about Solomon's reign in 1 Kings 3-11. Thus even though 1 Kings 1-2 describes the beginning of Solomon's reign, it is understood to be part of the David Narrative. In 1 Kings 1, David is an old man and his son Adonijah seems to be garnering support to become the next king. However, Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, working in concert with the prophet Nathan, manages to convince David to name Solomon as his heir. After David's death, Solomon begins his reign with a purge, executing several important people, including his rival brother Adonijah (1 Kgs 2).

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 15:19 where David refers to Absalom as "the king" (*hammelek*).

## ***1.2 Sexuality in the David Narrative***

A brief overview of the sexual episodes narrated in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 will demonstrate that sexual themes, events, and innuendos feature prominently in stories about David's rise to power, his reign, and his succession. During David's rise to power and consolidation of his throne, he takes several wives of considerable diplomatic importance. Two of these women, Michal and Abigail, play significant narrative roles during David's ascent to kingship (1 Sam 18:20-29, 19:11-17, 25). Also, when David is still part of Saul's entourage, he receives political allegiance couched in love language from two of Saul's children, Jonathan and Michal (1 Sam 18-20), and this language has sometimes been interpreted as erotic.<sup>13</sup> After Saul's death, his son and successor Ishba'al accuses his military commander Abner of having sexual relations with Saul's former consort Rizpah, which prompts Abner to switch his political support to David. David then negotiates the restoration of his marriage to Michal with Abner and Ishba'al, and Abner brings Michal to David before being murdered by David's commander Joab (2 Sam 3). Once David is king over Israel and Judah, he establishes the Ark of Yahweh at his capital in Jerusalem, whereupon his wife Michal criticizes his leadership of the cultic procession as sexually inappropriate and undignified. David retorts that Yahweh has chosen him to be king instead of Saul's descendents, which is followed by the information that Michal never has children (2 Sam 6:16; 20-23).

Sexuality plays an even more significant role in the narratives surrounding the rest of David's reign and involves several of his sons. David commits both adultery and murder in the famous episode involving Bathsheba and Uriah and must suffer the political consequences of his abuse of royal power (2 Sam 11:2-12:25). The rape of

---

<sup>13</sup> For further discussion, see sections 3.2.2 and 4.3.

David's daughter Tamar by her half-brother Amnon (2 Sam 13:1-22) catalyzes a narrative of revenge and rebellion by David's son Absalom, who murders Amnon and then leads a revolt against David (2 Sam 13:23-19). Sexual access to the royal consorts by the king's sons plays a part in Absalom's insurrection and the succession to David's throne: Absalom publicly takes sexual possession of ten of David's concubines on the palace roof (2 Sam 16:20-23), Adonijah makes pretensions to the throne immediately after David, in his old age, fails to have intercourse with the young and beautiful Abishag (1 Kgs 1:1-5), and Solomon has his royal rival Adonijah executed for requesting marriage to Abishag (1 Kgs 2:13-25).

The sheer number of stories related to sex in 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 indicates that sexuality is a significant theme within the David Narrative deserving of serious critical analysis. Throughout this study, my driving questions are: why is sexuality a motif particularly associated with the literary portrayal of King David, the founder of the Judahite dynasty, and what does it suggest about the writer(s)/editors of the David Narrative and their understanding of the royal ideology of David? I will attempt to answer these questions through a detailed analysis of the episodes involving sexuality in the David Narrative.

I reiterate that there are significant differences among episodes related to sexuality within the David Narrative, and I attempt to remain attuned to these disparities by organizing my discussion according to the divergent ways sexuality appears within the David Narrative. Though I discuss each text individually, I group the episodes relating to sexuality in the David Narrative into three main categories:

- 1) *Episodes in which sexual activity is not specifically stated in the narrative and must be assumed by the reader.* This section focuses first on stories about David's marriages and his wives: Saul's daughter Merab, though David ultimately does not marry her (1 Sam 18:17-19); the various appearances of Michal (1 Sam 18:20-29, 19:11-17, 25:44; 2 Sam 3:12-26, 6:23, 21:1-14); the story of David's marriage to Abigail, as well as the brief narrative mentions of Abigail and Ahinoam (1 Sam 25, 30; 2 Sam 2:1-4); the wives mentioned in the lists of David's sons (2 Sam 3:2-5); and Bathsheba after her marriage to David (2 Sam 12:24; 1 Kgs 1). In this section I also include a discussion of the relationship between David and Jonathan because, while sexuality is certainly not explicit in their interactions, some interpreters have seen an erotic component to their alliance (1 Sam 17:58-18:1-5, 19:1-7, 20, 23:16-18; 2 Sam 1:26).
- 2) *Episodes centered on accusations of sexual impropriety.* This chapter looks at Ishba'al's accusation against Abner in 2 Samuel 3:6-11; Michal's accusation against David in 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23; and Solomon's accusation against Adonijah in 1 Kings 2:13-25.
- 3) *Episodes in which sexual activity is overtly narrated.* This includes David's adultery with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, Amnon's rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22, and Absalom's sexual takeover of David's consorts in 2 Samuel 16:20-23. Conversely, David is specifically said *not* to have had sexual relations with Abishag in 1 Kings 1:1-5.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. Introduction

According to the Hebrew Bible, King David ruled over both Israel and Judah in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE and was succeeded by his son Solomon, a period often referred to as the United Monarchy. The biblical books of Samuel and Chronicles depict David as becoming king over both Israel and Judah, defeating the Philistines, conquering an empire of surrounding territories, and building a palace in Jerusalem while Solomon is credited with building the Temple of Yahweh. According to the Bible, Israel seceded from the United Monarchy after Solomon's reign, creating two separate kingdoms.<sup>14</sup> As is the case with much of the Hebrew Bible, the biblical portrayal of David was taken at face value until fairly recently. Now, however, almost all critical scholarship questions the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible's presentation of David and Solomon as well as the degree and scope of the alleged national unification of Israel and Judah under these kings.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Israel and Judah are always depicted as separate polities in extra-biblical sources.

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion and bibliography on the "Tenth Century Debate," see André Lemaire, "The United Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon," in *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks; Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1988); 85-108; Israel Finkelstein, "The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View," *Levant* 28 (1996): 177-187; idem, "The Stratigraphy and Chronology of Megiddo and Beth-shan in the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE," *Tel Aviv* 23 (1996): 170-84; Amihai Mazar, "Iron Age Chronology: A Reply to I. Finkelstein," *Levant* 29 (1997): 157-167; Finkelstein, "Bible Archaeology or Archaeology of Palestine in the Iron Age? A Rejoinder," *Levant* 30 (1998): 167-174; idem, "Hazor and the North in the Iron Age: A Low Chronology Perspective," *BASOR* 314 (1999): 55-70; Amnon Ben Tor, "Hazor and the Chronology of Northern Israel: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein," *BASOR* 317 (2000): 9-15; Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, "Chronological Separation, Geographical Segregation, or Ethnic Demarcation? Ethnography and the Iron Age Low Chronology," *BASOR* 322 (2001): 1-10; William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), esp. 97-158; Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, Mich.:

One group of scholars, known as the biblical minimalist or revisionist school, has even argued against the existence of a historical David altogether since they view the Hebrew Bible as a literary creation dating to the Persian or Hellenistic period that retrojects a glorious but entirely fictitious history upon Israel.<sup>16</sup> However, the discovery of the ninth-century BCE Tel Dan Stele<sup>17</sup> has provided extra-biblical evidence for a historical David.<sup>18</sup> Three fragments of the stele were discovered during the Hebrew Union College excavation of Tel Dan (previously named Tell el-Qadi) led by Avraham Biran in 1993 and 1994. Though the fragments were found in secondary contexts, the stele has been dated on archaeological and epigraphic grounds to the second half of the ninth century BCE. The Old Aramaic inscription on the stele indicates that it was erected

---

Eerdmans, 2001), 427-478; David Ussishkin, "Solomon's Jerusalem: The Text and the Facts on the Ground," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (eds. A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew; SBLSym18; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 103-115; Finkelstein and Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel* (ed. B. Schmidt; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 99-140; Finkelstein, "A Great United Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives," in *One God-One Cult-One Nation* (eds. R. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 1-28; and Mazar, "Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy," in *One God-One Cult-One Nation*, 29-58.

<sup>16</sup> See Niels-Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 155; Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel"* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 66-133; Thomas L. Thompson, *The Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 105-126.

<sup>17</sup> For discussions of the stele, as well as further bibliography, see Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 81-98; Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1994), 274-78; Biran and Naveh, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," *IEJ* 45 (1995): 1-18; George Athas, "Archaeological Context of the Fragments," in *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation* (JSOTSup 360; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003); Hallvard Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Critical Investigation of Recent Research on Its Paleography and Philology* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2006); idem, *The Dan Debate: The Tel Dan Inscription in Recent Research* (Recent Research in Biblical Studies; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009); Heather D. D. Parker, "The Levant Comes of Age: The Ninth Century B.C.E. through Script Traditions" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013), 128-140.

<sup>18</sup> André Lemaire and Nadav Na'aman also read *btwd* ("house of David") in the Mesha Stele. See Lemaire, "La dynastie davidique [*byt dwd*] dans deux inscriptions ouest-sémitiques du IXe s. av. J.-C.," *Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul vicino oriente antico* 11 (1994): 17-19; idem, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," *BAR* 3 (1994): 30-37; Na'aman, "The Campaign of Mesha against Horonaim," *BN* 73 (1994): 27-30. However, see also the forthcoming work of Parker, "The Levant Comes of Age," 128-140.



by a ruler of Aram<sup>19</sup> after a victory over Israel and, significantly, contains the phrase

*btdwd*, representing *bêt dāwid* “house of David,” the name of the ancient Judahite

dynasty.<sup>20</sup> It also includes the partially preserved names —*ram* of Israel and —*yahu* of

---

<sup>19</sup> The majority of scholars attribute the stele to Hazael of Damascus (ca. 842-796 BCE). Throughout the ninth century BCE Aram and Israel competed for territorial hegemony and often came into conflict, although at various points they formed coalitions to withstand the Assyrian onslaught from the east. Hazael expanded the territory of Aram-Damascus considerably, including portions of Israel, which was in a weakened state in the aftermath of Jehu’s revolt. See Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (ed. Diana Edelman; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); I. Kottsieper, “Die Inschrift vom Tell Dan und die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Aram-Damaskus und Israel in der 1. Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends vor Christus,” in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf. Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient. Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahre mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen Unter Mitwirkung von Hanspeter Schaudig herausgegeben von Manfred Dietrich und I. Kottsieper* (AOAT 2509; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 475-500; idem, “Tel Dan Inscription (KAI 310) and the Political Relations between Aram-Damascus and Israel in the First Half of the First Millennium BCE,” 104-134; and Edward Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 347-407.

<sup>20</sup> The consensus of scholarship is that *bytdwd* should be translated “House of David” and understood as a reference to the kingdom of Judah. See, for example, Biran and Naveh, “An Aramaic Stele from Tel Dan,” 81-98; idem, “The Tel Dan Inscription,” 1-18; Josef Tropper, “Eine altaramäische Steleninschrift aus Dan,” *UF* 25 (1993): 395-406; Z. Kallai, “The King of Israel and the House of David,” *IEJ* 43 (1993): 248; Shmuel Ahituv, “Suzerain or Vassal? Notes on the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan,” *IEJ* 43 (1993): 256-57; idem, “The Tel Dan Inscription,” in *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 466-73; M. Dijkstra, “An Epigraphic and Historical Note on the Stela of Tel Dan,” *BN* 74 (1994): 10-14; Edward Lipiński, “The Victory Stele from Tell el-Qadi,” in *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II* (ed. Edward Lipiński; Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 83-101; idem, *The Arameans: Their History, Culture, Religion* (OLA 100; Leuven: Peeters) 2001; P. Kaswaller and M. Pazzini, “La stele aramaica di Tel Dan,” *Revista Biblica* 2 (1994): 193-201; B. Margalit, “The Old Aramaic Stele from Tel Dan,” *NABU* 1 (1994) 20-21; idem, “The Old Aramaic Inscription of Hazael from Dan,” *UF* 26 (1994): 317-20; Alan R. Millard, “Absence of Word Divider Proves Nothing,” *BAR* 20 (1994): 68-69; idem, “The Tel Dan Stele,” *COS* 2.39: 161-62; André Lemaire, “Epigraphie palestinienne: Nouveaux documents I Fragment de stele araméenne de Tell Dan (IXe s. av. J.-C.),” *Henoch* 16 (1994): 87-93; idem, “The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography,” *JSOT* 81 (1998): 3-14; McCarter, *Ancient Inscriptions: Voices from the Biblical World* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1996), 87; Émile Puech, “La Stèle Araméenne de Dan: Bar Hadad II et La Coalition des Omrides et de La Maison de David,” *RB* 101 (1994): 215-241; Anson Rainey, “The House of David and the House of the Deconstructionists,” *BAR* 20 (1994): 47; Baruch Halpern, “The Stela from Dan: Epigraphic and Historical Considerations,” *BASOR* 296 (1994): 63-80; B. Becking, “Het ‘Huis van David’ in een pre-exilische inscriptie uit Tel-Dan,” *NedTT* 49 (1995): 108-23; V. Sasson, “The Old Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan: Philological, Literary, and Historical Aspects,” *JSS* XL (1995): 11-30; William Schniedewind, “Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu’s Revolt,” *BASOR* 302 (1996): 75-90; Kenneth A. Kitchen, “A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BCE, and Deity \*Dod as Dead as the Dodo?” *JSOT* 76 (1997): 29-44; Simon B. Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1997); I. Kottsieper, “Tel Dan Inscription (KAI 310),” especially n.3; Kurt L. Noll, “The God Who is Among the Danites,” *JSOT* 80 (1998): 3-23; Paul- Eugène Dion, *Les Araméens à l’âge du fer: histoire politique et structures sociales. Études bibliques, nouvelle série* 34 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1997), 225-232; idem, “The Tel Dan Stele and Its Historical Significance,” in *Michael: Historical, Epigraphical, and Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer* (eds. Y. Avishur, M. Heltzer, R. Deutsch; Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center

Judah, which scholarly consensus understands to be the contemporary ninth-century kings Jehoram of Israel (852-841 BCE) and Ahaziah of Judah (841 BCE).<sup>21</sup> Thus it seems that by the ninth century BCE there was already a tradition, known even in Aram, of someone named David as the founder of the Judahite dynasty.

---

Publications, 1999), 145-56; J.-W. Wesseliuss, "The First Royal Inscription from Ancient Israel: The Tel Dan Inscription Reconsidered," *SJOT* 13 (1999): 163-86; idem, "The Road to Jezreel: Primary History and The Tel Dan Inscription," *SJOT* 15 (2001): 83-103; Gershon Galil, "A Re-arrangement of the Fragments of the Tel Dan Inscription and the Relations between Israel and Aram," 16-21; Hallvard Hagelia, "How Important is the Tel Dan Stele, except for Its Relation to the Bible?" *SEA* 69 (2004): 155-66; K. L. Younger, "Hazeel, Son of a Nobody," in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* (eds. P. Bienkowski, C. Mee, and E. Slater; New York: T&T Clark, 2005): 245-270, see especially n.3; S. Irvine, "The Last Battle of Hadadezer," *JBL* 124 (2005): 341-47; Dennis Pardee, review of Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*, *JNES* 65 (2006): 289-291; Christopher A. Rollston, "Inscription, Tel Dan," in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 48; Demsky, "On Reading Ancient Inscriptions," 29-35; idem, "Reading Northwest Semitic Inscriptions," *NEA* 70 (2007): 68-74; R. Byrne, "Letting David Go," *BAR* 34 (2008): 30, 78.

However, there are those who disagree with this interpretation, including some who have argued for reading *dwd* as the god Dôd. See Frederick H. Cryer, "On the Recently Discovered 'House of David' Inscription," *SJOT* 8 (1994): 3-19; idem, "A 'Betdwd' Miscellany: Dwd, Dwd' or Dwdh?" *SJOT* 9 (1995): 52-58; Philip R. Davies, "Bytdwd and swkt dwyd: A Comparison," *JSOT* 64 (1994): 23-24; idem, "'House of David' Built on Sand: The Sins of the Biblical Maximizers," *BAR* 20 (1994): 54-55; Niels-Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology," *JSOT* 19 (1994): 3-22; E. A. Knauf, Albert de Pury, and Thomas Römer, "«\*BaytDawîd ou \*BaytDôd? Une relecture de la nouvelle inscription de Tel Dan," *BN* 72 (1994): 60-69; E. Ben Zvi, "On the Reading 'bytdwd' in the Aramaic Stele from Tel Dan," *JSOT* 64 (1994): 25-32; H. M. Barstad and B. Becking, "Does the Stele from Tel-Dan Refer to a Deity Dôd," *BN* 77 (1995): 5-12; R. G. Lehmann and M. Reichel, "DOD und ASIMA in Tell Dan," *BN* 77 (1995): 23-31; H.-P. Müller, "Die aramäische Inschrift von Tel Dan," *ZAH* vii (1995): 121-39; Lemche, "Bemerkungen über einen Paradigmenwechsel aus Anlaß einer neuentdeckten Inschrift," in *Meilenstein. ÄAT* 30 (ed. M. Weippert; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 99-108; idem, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, 43; E. A. Knauf, "Das 'Huis Davids' in der alt-aramäische Inschrift vom Tel Dan," *BK* (1996): 9-10; Carl S. Ehrlich, "The BYTDWD-Inscription and Israelite Historiography: Taking Stock after Half a Decade of Research," in *The World of the Aramaeans II* (eds. P. M. M. Daviau, J. W. Wevers, and M. Weigl; JSOTSup 325; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 57-71; Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription*, 217-26; idem, "Setting the Record Straight: What are We Making of the Tel Dan Inscription," *JSS* 51 (2006): 241-55. I am very grateful to Heather Parker for the generous use of her bibliography on the Tel Dan inscription, as well as her images and drawings, from her forthcoming dissertation, "The Levant Comes of Age."

<sup>21</sup> However, for *-ram*, Noll also suggests Ahiram or Hiram of Tyre as an option ("The God Who is Among the Danites," 9-10); Becking suggests Adonleram, servant of the king, of Aramaic Hamath ("The Second Danite Inscription: Some Remarks," *BN* 81 [1996]: 27), and Athas suggests Makbirra of Hazor (*The Tel Dan Inscription*, 237-44). For *-yahu*, Dion reads "Jehu." He does not believe that this name is associated with the following *bytdwd* phrase but with the previous phrase ("Tel Dan Stele," 146). Athas suggests Amaziah son of Joash (*The Tel Dan Inscription*, 194, 244).

The “United Monarchy” of David and Solomon as presented in Samuel and Kings is most likely an embellishment of whatever the historical reality might have been. However, I agree with the majority of biblical scholars in positing that there was a historical David who forms the basis for the biblical narratives. At the same time, however, the stories about him should only be considered “historical” to a degree since they are more concerned with ideology and theology.<sup>22</sup> The historical David was probably a small-scale Judahite tribal leader who exercised hegemony over Israelite tribes, perhaps with military success over some adjacent territories, and who potentially played a role in the transition to statehood in the central highlands of Israel and Judah. A critical reading of the biblical narrative is not entirely inconsistent with this understanding of David historically.

Since this study is focused on the connection between sexuality and kingship within the biblical stories about King David, it is not primarily concerned with issues of historiography. However, I am concerned with the “remembering” of David that is preserved in the biblical narratives in Samuel and Kings and therefore take seriously the mindset and world view of the ancient authors, redactors, and their audiences, as much as this can be determined. My questions are less about the historical David, whoever he

---

<sup>22</sup> A major question for scholars of the ancient Near East, as well as other fields, is the degree to which ancient historiography differs from a modern, Western understanding of history. For some examples of the discussions of biblical “historiography,” see John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983); Thomas L. Thompson, “Israelite Historiography,” *ABD* 3: 206-212; Lester L. Grabbe, ed. *Can a ‘History of Israel’ Be Written?* (JSOTSup 245; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); idem, “The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography,” in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (eds. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 44-75; Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Maachi, eds., *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Mark S. Smith’s critique of the “idolatry of history” in *Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 162-166; Mario Liverani, *Israel’s History and the History of Israel* (trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies; London: Equinox, 2005).

was, than they are about why the people who wrote about him chose to portray him in the way that they did. Concerning the stories of David, Susan Ackerman has aptly remarked that any explanation of these narratives “has to make sense within the conceptual world of ancient Israel...to ‘fit,’ that is, within the parameters of what we can know about ancient Israelite society,”<sup>23</sup> and this is what I attempt in my analysis of the theme of sexuality within the David Narrative. As I examine the connection between sexuality and political power in these stories, I regard as important the *Sitz im Leben* of the writers of these texts and their audiences. Determining these historical contexts, however, is far from a simple task and first necessitates a discussion of the source-critical scholarship of the David Narrative.

## **2.2. The David Narrative within the Deuteronomistic History**

The biblical books of Samuel and Kings make up part of what biblical scholars refer to as the Deuteronomistic History (afterwards DtrH). The DtrH consists of the books of Joshua through Second Kings and recounts the histories of Israel and Judah from the conquest of the land until the Babylonian exile. Because the David story in the books of Samuel is part of this corpus, discussions of the composition history of the David Narrative are inherently bound up in debate surrounding the DtrH. It is necessary, therefore, to provide a brief overview of the different schools of thought regarding the composition history of the DtrH before turning more specifically to arguments focused on the books of Samuel.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 162-163.

<sup>24</sup> For more complete overviews of the history of scholarship surrounding the DtrH, see Lewis V. Alexander, *The Origin and Development of the Deuteronomistic History Theory and its Significance for Biblical Interpretation* (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993); Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, “Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues,” in

The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are called “Deuteronomistic” because of the affinities they share with the book of Deuteronomy. Linguistic similarities among these texts are readily identifiable.<sup>25</sup> As Thomas Römer points out, “Even reading these books in an English translation, one easily recognizes therein the same style and vocabulary as in the book of Deuteronomy.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Deuteronomy alludes to events which occur in other books of the DtrH,<sup>27</sup> so that the final book of Moses also serves as something of a preface to Israel’s history in the land. Furthermore, the books of the DtrH share considerable content and theological outlook with Deuteronomy, such as the emphasis on fidelity to only one deity, Yahweh, and obedience to his laws, such as the centralization of worship. The success or failure of the people of Israel within the books of Joshua through Kings is thus judged by their adherence to precepts outlined in the book of Deuteronomy.

### *Martin Noth*

The concept of the DtrH was first articulated in 1943 by Martin Noth, who saw the books of Deuteronomy through Kings as a well-planned historical work by a single

---

*Israel Constructs its History*, 24-41; Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 13-41; Jeremy Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 79-156; John Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 1-30; Richard J. Thompson, *The Deuteronomistic Covenant and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Ideology: A Study of the Deuteronomistic History in its Historical Context* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2011), 1-33, published as *Terror of the Radiance: Assur Covenant to YHWH Covenant*, (OBO 258; Fribourg: Academic Press, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> See the detailed list of Deuteronomistic/Deuteronomistic phraseology (with references) in Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 320-365 (Appendix A).

<sup>26</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Particularly the crossing of the Jordan and possession of the land, with injunctions to follow Yahweh’s laws once settled in the land. For example, see Deut 4:1, 14; 6:12-15; 7-8. Also, the Law of the King in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 seems to know of Solomon (cf. 1Kgs 10:26-11:5).

author-editor.<sup>28</sup> Noth identified this author-editor as the Deuteronomist (Dtr).<sup>29</sup> Noth viewed Dtr as an historian who was an “honest broker” of his sources, meaning that he faithfully edited earlier material even if it conflicted with his own outlook. Therefore, Noth regarded the DtrH as a valuable historical work. According to Noth, Dtr was both an editor in that he compiled earlier sources, as well as an author in that he created a relatively unified historical work to explain the disasters of the Neo-Assyrian conquest of Israel and the Neo-Babylonian conquest of Judah, which had demolished both kingdoms and deported most of the ruling population. Noth argued that since Dtr’s purpose in compiling this history was to justify these catastrophes, Dtr judged the people of Israel by their failure to abide by the precepts in the core of Deuteronomy (Deut 4:44-30:20) and accounted for the loss of the land and the exile as Yahweh’s just punishments for Israel’s transgressions. Noth dated Dtr to the time of the Babylonian exile, shortly after the release of King Jehoiachin from Babylonian prison in 562 BCE, a story that is recounted in the final chapter of the book of Kings (2 Kgs 25:27-30).

---

<sup>28</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; JSOTSup 182; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); translation of the first part of *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967; orig. 1943). Though Noth is considered the ‘father’ of the DtrH, he built upon the work of his predecessors. By Noth’s time, the existence of a Deuteronomistic redaction in the Hexateuch (Genesis-Joshua) and in the historical books was taken for granted as one of the sources posited in Julius Wellhausen’s immensely influential Documentary Hypothesis (1899). However, following Wellhausen, who observed a split between the books of Joshua and Judges, most source criticism of the early twentieth century was focused on analyzing the Hexateuch while the historical books were largely neglected. Noth first abandoned the idea of a Hexateuch in his commentary on Joshua (*Das Buch Josua* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; HAT I/7; Tübingen: Mohr, 1953; orig. 1938]).

<sup>29</sup> A key characteristic of Deuteronomistic editing observed by Noth is the presence of several “chapters of reflection,” which usually takes the form of a speech by the main historical figure but also can be presented by the narrator, whom Noth understood to be the Dtr writer himself (*Deuteronomistic History*, 31-33). These reflection chapters function to divide the history of Israel into five successive periods: the conquest under Joshua (Josh 1; 12; 23); the time of judges (Judg 2:11-1 Sam 12); the installation of the monarchy (1 Sam 12-1 Kgs 8); the history of the kingdoms of Judah & Israel until the fall of Samaria (1 Kgs 8-2 Kgs 17); and, finally, the last days of Judah (2 Kgs 17-25).

## *The Cross School*

The basic components of Noth's hypothesis were very influential within the field of biblical scholarship, particularly after the second edition of his study appeared in 1957.<sup>30</sup> It became common—as it still is—to refer to the books of Joshua through 2 Kings as “the Deuteronomistic History.”<sup>31</sup> The first major adjustment to Noth's thesis came from Frank Moore Cross in 1968.<sup>32</sup> First, Cross critiqued Noth's theory based on authorial intent. Noth had thought of Dtr as having a rather grim view of the histories of Israel and Judah, but Cross questioned this view of Dtr, citing such positive examples as the promise of an everlasting dynasty to David in 2 Samuel 7 and the reiteration of this promise in the assessments of the reigns of the kings of Judah. Secondly, Cross questioned Noth's date for the DtrH. The expression “to this day” seen in the book of Kings, even in Dtr sections (e.g., 2 Kgs 8:22; 16:6), seems to presuppose the existence of the monarchy, which would not fit an exilic setting for Dtr as proposed by Noth. In light

---

<sup>30</sup> Early indirect support for Noth's thesis came from two similar arguments written around the same time. In an essay written in 1938 but only published in 1953, Alfred Jepsen makes a similar argument to Noth's, positing a prophetic redaction to the book of Kings and dating it to about 550 BCE (*Die Quellen des Königsbuches* [Halle: Niemeyer, 1953, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1956]). Ivan Engell traced a P source and a D source from Genesis through Kings, and his D sources lined up with Noth's Dtr (*Gamla testamentet: En traditionshistorisk inledning* [Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1945]; idem, “The Pentateuch,” in idem, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament* [trans. John T. Willis with Helmer Ringgren; Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969], 50-67, esp. 62).

<sup>31</sup> However, see the early opposition to Noth's hypothesis by Otto Eissfeldt, “Die Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament,” *TLZ* 72 (1947):71-76; idem, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (trans. Peter R. Ackroyd; Oxford: Blackwell, 1965; New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Eissfeldt considered a single redaction to be a solution too simple for the literary complexity of the DtrH, anticipating models of multiple redaction. Other early criticism argued for Dtr as a school rather than an individual.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Moore Cross, “The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” in idem, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289; originally published as “The Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Perspectives in Jewish Learning* (Annual of the College of Jewish Studies 3; Chicago: College of Jewish Studies, 1968), 9-24.

of these and other examples, Cross proposed a double redaction of the DtrH.<sup>33</sup> He dated the first edition of the DtrH to the time of the monarchy, specifically the reign of King Josiah of Judah (639-609 BCE), who initiated sweeping cultic reforms. This edition focused on the theme of “sins of Jeroboam” to explain the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel, which it contrasted with the faithfulness of David and his descendants, the kings of Judah. This theme culminated with the reign and reforms of Josiah, whom Dtr cast as a new David.<sup>34</sup> The second edition of the DtrH, which Cross dated to the time of the Exile, brought the existing DtrH up to date by adding the fall of Judah to Nechadnezzar. This edition also added the material about the “sins of Manasseh,” and recast the entire history of the two kingdoms to make it relevant for exiles.<sup>35</sup> Cross subsequently received support from several of his students, particularly Richard Nelson, Richard Friedman, and Baruch Halpern,<sup>36</sup> and this view of the DtrH, referred to as the Cross or Harvard school, quickly became the leading view in English-speaking scholarship, particularly in the United States.

---

<sup>33</sup> As Cross notes at the beginning of his essay (pp. 275-276), earlier models had called for a double-redaction of the DtrH. See especially Abraham Kuenen, *He ontstaan van de Historische Boeken des Ouden Verbonds*, vol. 1 of *Historisch-kritisch onderzoek naar het ontstaan en de verzameling van de boeken des Ouden Verbonds* (2 vols.; Leiden: Engels, 1861), 249-282. Cross’ rearticulation of the model challenges the purported intent of DtrH.

<sup>34</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 279-285.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 285-287.

<sup>36</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). Nelson was not Cross’ own student; however, studied under Patrick D. Miller who had been Cross’ student. Richard E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* (HSM 22; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981); Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (HSM 25; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981). See also to some extent Seven L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler’s Use of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984), but he later alters his view (see below). For further bibliography of support for the Crossian model, see Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 92, n. 49.



### *The Smend School*

Shortly after Cross' proposal, the next major development in DtrH scholarship came from Rudolf Smend and his students at the University of Göttingen. The Smend or Göttingen School focused on post-Dtr redactions in the DtrH. Like Noth, they placed Dtr during the Exile but abandoned the idea of a single author-redactor. Studying speeches in Joshua and Judges, Smend identified a strand of redaction concerned with the law that he called the nomistic Dtr, or Dtr-N.<sup>37</sup> Walter Dietrich identified a post-Dtr prophetic redaction (Dtr-P) focused on prophecy and fulfillment in the book of Kings, and he dated this redactional strand before Smend's Dtr-N.<sup>38</sup> Building upon the ideas of Smend and Dietrich, Timo Veijola argued that a diachronic understanding of this various material can resolve the seemingly contradictory attitudes towards monarchy in the book of Samuel. He proposed that the first edition of DtrH presented a favorable view of monarchy, but this was later qualified by the Dtr-P redactor, who added material legitimizing prophetic authority, and finally Dtr-N added redactions that presented a negative view of monarchy and a focus on obedience to the Law.<sup>39</sup> Like the Cross

---

<sup>37</sup> Rudolf Smend, "The Law and the Nations: A Contribution to Deuteronomistic Tradition History," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (eds. Gary N. Knoppers and J. G. McConville; trans. P. T. Daniels; SBTs 8; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrans, 2000), 95-111; translation of "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Ran zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H. W. Wolff; Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 494-509.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

<sup>39</sup> Timo Veijola, *Die Ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (AASF B 193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975); idem, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (AASF B, 198; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1977).

School, the Smend School quickly gained many adherents and continues to be highly influential in European scholarship.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Arguments for Multiple Pre-Dtr Redactions*

Another main focus of discussions surrounding the DtrH since the 1970s has considered models of multiple pre-exilic redactions of the DtrH. Methodologically, arguments for multiple redactions of the DtrH generally have more in common with the Cross School since they tend to be based on thematic and formulary structures rather than employ the minute redactional analysis typical of the Smend School with its various post-Dtr redactions. Common to the the range of multiple-redaction models is the view that the final form of DtrH is the result of a long process of redaction that took place in several stages. Those who argue for various pre-exilic versions of the DtrH assume that “the DtrH served as an operative textual commentary on Israelite historiography through much of the history of the divided kingdom.”<sup>41</sup> One branch of the multiple redaction model has focused on regnal formulae in the book of Kings. Focusing on variant forms of the evaluations of the kings of Israel and Judah in 1-2 Kings, Helga Weippert expanded upon Cross’ double-redaction model and argued for a pre-Dtr edition of the

---

<sup>40</sup> For bibliography of supporters of the Smend School, see Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 96, n. 66.

<sup>41</sup> Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 102. See his significant discussion of arguments for pre-Dtr editions on pp. 102-156.

history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah under Hezekiah (a triple redaction).<sup>42</sup>

Weippert's proposal garnered significant support as well as counter-arguments.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Prophetic Redaction Hypothesis*

The other main branch of discussions surrounding pre-Dtr editions has concerned the theory of a prophetic redaction of material in Samuel and Kings. Like the Dtr-P of the Smend School, Anglophone scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s also posited the existence of a prophetic redactor;<sup>44</sup> however, it placed this Prophetic Redaction before the Josianic edition of the DtrH posited by Cross. Bruce Birch, followed by P. Kyle McCarter, A. D. H. Mayes and Anthony Campbell, proposed that this additional editorial layer was responsible for passages having a negative view of monarchy and for elevating

---

<sup>42</sup> Helga Weippert, "Die 'deuteronomistischen' Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher," *Bib* 53 (1972): 301-39; idem, "Der Ort, den Jahwe erwählen wird, um dort seinen Namen wohnen zu lassen: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Formel," *BZ* 24 (1980): 76-94; and "Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk: Sein Ziel und Ende in der neueren Forschung," *TRu* 50 (1985): 213-249.

<sup>43</sup> Weippert's argument was accepted with some adjustments by W. Boyd Barrick, "On the Removal of the 'High Places' in 1-2 Kings," *Bib* 55 (1974): 257-259; Anthony Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1-2 Kings 10)* (CBQMS 17; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986), 139-202; André Lemaire, "Toward a Redactional History of the Book of Kings," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah*, trans. from "Vers l'Histoire de la Rédaction des Livres des Rois," *ZAW* 98 (1986): 221-236; Baruch Halpern and David S. Vanderhooft, "The Editions of Kings in the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.E.," *HUCA* 62 (1991): 179-244; Erik Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 33-135.

However, Iain W. Provan, (*Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* [BZAW 172; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988]) critiqued the arguments of Weippert and her supporters, concluding that an edition of DtrH was produced early in the reign of Josiah, which ended with the reign of Hezekiah (120-130; 153-155). See also the very different position of Erik Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Enneateuch* (BZAW 319; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), esp. 1-110. He argues that the only redactional boundary in Kings is between 2 Kings 17-18 (the destruction of Israel by Assyria and the reign of Hezekiah) and that this is post-Dtr.

<sup>44</sup> As early as the 1940s, however, the DtrH was recognized as having a prophetic orientation. For a survey of previous works discussing the prophetic nature of DtrH, see Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 113-118.

the figure of prophet at the outset of the narrative.<sup>45</sup> According to this view, a northern prophetic guild unhappy with the Israelite monarchy compiled and edited a history of Israel and Judah that made its way to Jerusalem with refugees that fled Israel after its destruction by the Neo-Assyrian Empire in 722 BCE. Then, during the reign of Josiah, Dtr used this material to create the first edition of the DtrH, which was subsequently added to and redacted during the Exile. This theory has had significant implications for historical-critical studies of the David Narrative (see section 2.3 below).

### *The “Neo-Nothians”*

In contrast to the general trend of seeing multiple layers of redaction within the DtrH, John Van Seters and Steven McKenzie advocated a return to the Nothian idea of the Deuteronomist as an individual author/editor dating to the exilic period and focused on identifying a core DtrH.<sup>46</sup> However, both of these “Neo-Nothians” limit the number of texts which they ascribe to Dtr and assign the rest to later redactors. Despite their shared outlooks on Dtr, however, McKenzie and Van Seters differ widely on questions of date and sources present within the DtrH, particularly regarding the material about David. McKenzie regards the David Narrative as containing valuable historical information edited by Dtr.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, Van Seters, rather than seeing Dtr as an “honest broker” of

---

<sup>45</sup> See Bruce C. Birch, *The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy: The Growth and Development of 1 Samuel 7-15* (SBLDS 27; Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1976); also idem, “The Development of the Tradition of the Anointing of Saul in 1 Sam 9:1-10:16,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 55-68; and “The Choosing of Saul at Mizpah,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 447-457; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 18-23; and *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 7-8; A. D. H. Mayes, “The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy,” *ZAW* 90 (1978): 1-19; Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 17-124, esp. 111 ff.; *1 Samuel* (FOTL 7; Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2003), 220-221.

<sup>46</sup> John Van Seters, *In Search of History*; also, *Saga of King David*; Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (SVT 42; Leiden: Brill, 1991); idem, “The Trouble with Kingship,” in *Israel Constructs its History*, 286-314; and *King David: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. 9-46.

<sup>47</sup> However, McKenzie regards the David and Bathsheba narrative in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 as post-Dtr.

his sources, as was Noth's view, regards Dtr as more of a creative author who made very free use of these sources. For Van Seters, this is particularly the case with the sections of Samuel that depict David as king, and he regards much of 2 Samuel as late and fictional.

#### *Recent Trends in DtrH Scholarship*

The positions of McKenzie and Van Seters have remained in the minority, as most scholarship on the DtrH has continued to move away from a single Dtr edition and to posit multiple redactions of the DtrH both before and after the Exile. However, a major debate over the date of the source materials in the DtrH continues, especially concerning the figure of David in Samuel. While a fair number of English-speaking scholars maintain early dates for the composition of Samuel, the situation is quite different in Europe. With the exceptions of scholars such as Walter Dietrich and Jacques Vermeylen,<sup>48</sup> both of whom propose tenth-century BCE dates for the basic structure of Samuel, the dominant trend among continental European scholars is to date the composition of Samuel closer to the formulation of the entire DtrH, as seen in the following discussion of the work of German scholar Reinhard Kratz and Swiss scholar Thomas Römer.

#### *Reinhard Kratz and Thomas Römer*

In Reinhard Kratz's ambitious discussion of the composition histories of all the narrative books of the Hebrew Bible, he views the formation of the DtrH in light of older

---

<sup>48</sup> Walter Dietrich, *The Early Monarchy in Israel: The Tenth Century B.C.E.* (trans. Joachim Vette; BLBibEnc 3; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 227-316; trans. of *Die frühe Königszeit in Israel: 10. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Biblische Enzyklopädie 3; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997); Jacques Vermeylen, *La loi du plus fort: Histoire de la rédaction des récits davidiques de 1 Samuel à 1 Rois 2* (BETL 154; Leuven: University Press, 2000), 471-624.

theories surrounding the Hexateuch and the Enneateuch.<sup>49</sup> Regarding the Former Prophets, he argues that without Dtr and its connections all that remains is a loose connection of disparate narratives, and this idea undergirds his view of the formation of Samuel and Kings. In Kratz's view, the beginning of the Dtr redaction lies in Samuel-Kings and from these texts extends into Judges, Joshua, and Deuteronomy, as well as to some extent the rest of the Pentateuch.<sup>50</sup> For Kratz, then, the DtrH project is intrinsically connected to the historiographic accounts of the monarchs of Israel and Judah.

Kratz argues that in the book of Samuel the narrative material is original while the Dtr framework is secondary.<sup>51</sup> He concludes that an early form of Samuel has been overlaid with several layers of Dtr "annalistic framework" as well as the Dtr editing.<sup>52</sup> This pre-Dtr edition of Samuel is made up of three narrative complexes: the traditions of Saul, a collection of Jerusalem court stories, and the history of David's rise, which was composed as a literary bridge between the first two units and is later. All three of these narrative complexes went through a process of growth and editing before being combined and then incorporated by Dtr. He locates the time of the pre-Dtr edition of Samuel to the period between the conquests of the Israelite kingdom and the kingdom Judah, sometime between 720-597 BCE,<sup>53</sup> though it seems that he dates the composition of the Saul traditions and Judahite court narratives earlier than this period.

---

<sup>49</sup> Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (trans. John Bowden; London: T&T Clark, 2005); trans. of *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen: Bandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 216-221.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 155-158.

<sup>51</sup> Kratz, *Composition of Narrative Books*, 159.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., esp. 170-180.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 181-183.

Thomas Römer presents his model as a compromise to the competing views of the formation of DtrH.<sup>54</sup> In his view, the Crossian model provides a fitting explanation for those texts which seem to presuppose a monarchical ideology and are optimistic regarding the future of Israel; however, he argues that a Josianic setting for most of the DtrH texts does not explain satisfactorily the numerous allusions to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile. Regarding the Smend School, Römer argues that their approaches rightly emphasize how much the disaster of the exile permeates most of the DtrH and their identification of three or more redactional layers may point to the oversimplification of a 2-edition hypothesis. However, a major criticism of the Smend School is that it fractures the DtrH into so many separate strands that it loses any literary coherence.<sup>55</sup>

Building upon these and others' observations,<sup>56</sup> Römer argues that the Neo-Assyrian period (more specifically the seventh century BCE) should be regarded as the starting point for Dtr's literary production. Römer sees three main redactional layers corresponding to three successive editions of the DtrH, each of which can be located in a different historical and social context: a Neo-Assyrian edition (after the destruction of

---

<sup>54</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Römer does not say this explicitly, but his thesis seems to presuppose an awareness of this critique. For examples of objections to the Smend School, see Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 97-101; Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 4-14; Mark A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 7-10.

<sup>56</sup> Römer cites Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings*; Norbert Lohfink, "Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks" (first published 1981) in idem, *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II* (SBA.AT 12; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 125-142.

Israel and the influx of northern scribes into Judah), a Neo-Babylonian edition (exilic), and Persian period edition (post-exilic).<sup>57</sup>

### *Concluding Remarks*

I tend to agree with arguments for multiple stages of DtrH redaction, especially those models that envision several proto-Dtr editions of what became the DtrH. Also, with the majority of views on the DtrH, I agree that Dtr used various documents as sources in the development of the DtrH and view any pre-Dtr edition as also incorporating earlier compositions. I locate the initial impetus for combining texts originating from the northern kingdom of Israel with those from the southern kingdom of Judah in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE after the fall of the of Israel to the Neo-Assyrian Empire in 722 BCE.<sup>58</sup> The influx of Israelite scribes—and Israelite texts—into Jerusalem in the wake of such a devastating conquest would have brought the writings of both countries together under entirely new socio-political circumstances. While previously the historiographic writings of both countries would have existed in separate environments, presumably at this point these originally disparate materials would have begun to be combined. Thus, I posit that proto-forms of the DtrH texts were in existence by this point. However, since I imagine that this process would have taken some time, I agree in locating the first complete edition of the present form of DtrH—and what can be

---

<sup>57</sup> Römer's proposal engendered a large response; while much has been positive, his argument has also received several critiques and raised additional questions about the DtrH, especially regarding his argument for his proposed Persian-period edition and for the beginnings of the DtrH. See especially the essays by Richard D. Nelson, Steven L. McKenzie, Ekart Otto, and Yairah Amit, in "A Conversation with Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005)," ed. Raymond F. Person, Jr., *JHS* 9 (2005).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Richard D. Nelson, "A Response to Thomas C. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*," and Yairah Amit, "The Book of Judges: Fruit of 100 Years of Creativity," both in "A Conversation with Thomas Römer," 5-14; 28-35, as well as Kratz, *Composition of Narrative Books*, 181-183.



recognized as obvious Dtr structure and additions—as probably dating to the Josianic period (mid-to-late seventh century BCE) with later Exilic redactions.

Because the sexuality motif in the David Narrative is also part of the DtrH, I will briefly discuss my placement of these episodes within the development of the DtrH. The presence of a motif might suggest a particular compositional or redactional strand. However, the divergence of the presentation of sexuality within the David Narrative suggests that the sexuality motif involved the work of more than one author or editor and was integrated at various points to the David Narrative. I am generally inclined to see at least the majority of the episodes involving sexuality in the David Narrative as part of a pre-Dtr edition of the David Narrative in Samuel. Apart from the presence of Dtr editing, episodes with the sexuality motif do not display Dtr ideology but instead look like original source materials that have been shaped by Dtr (e.g. Abigail's speech in 2 Sam 25 and Abner's response to Ishba'al in 2 Sam 3). The sexuality motif usually appears in core stories pertaining to David, though this does not suggest that all of the episodes related to sexuality were necessarily part of the earliest material about David. However, I think these episodes had become incorporated into the David Narrative by the time of the pre-Dtr edition of Samuel. Moreover, several of the episodes that contain sexual themes depict David in contradistinction to the type of glorious king envisioned by a Dtr of Hezekiah's or Josiah's time by admitting David's weakened state of power or character (e.g. 1 Sam 25; 2 Sam 11-12; 13:1-22; 16:20-23; 1 Kgs 1), which suggests these compositions are pre-Dtr.

### ***2.3. Historical-Critical Approaches to the David Narrative***

A comparison of the books of Samuel with those of Judges and Kings shows some considerable differences. For example, Samuel lacks the overarching structures as well as the explicit narrative commentary generally attributed to Dtr that is apparent in both the books of Judges and 1-2 Kings. In his commentary on 1 Samuel, Kyle McCarter remarks that “the most striking aspect of the Deuteronomistic redaction of Samuel, whether Josianic or Exilic, is its sparseness.”<sup>59</sup> This lighter editorial/redactional activity of Dtr in the David Narrative has made distinguishing Dtr’s sources within the larger narrative corpus a key component of scholarship on the books of Samuel.

The previous discussion of a pre-Dtr Prophetic Redaction has important implications for the study of the David Narrative, especially regarding an explanation for the lack of Dtr editing in Samuel. According to the Prophetic Redaction hypothesis, it was the redactional activity of a prophetic school that combined and edited the stories involving the Ark of Yahweh, the prophet Samuel, the rise and fall of King Saul, David’s rise to power, his years as king, and the succession of his son Solomon. The prophetic editors particularly highlighted Samuel’s role as they reworked the earlier material in their possession and added critical views of kingship, and the resulting narrative was later incorporated by Dtr into the DtrH where it received subsequent but limited redaction.<sup>60</sup> The Prophetic Redaction hypothesis attributes the lack of significant Dtr editing in the books of Samuel to this intermediate phase of literary development, where this narrative

---

<sup>59</sup> McCarter, *I Samuel*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Dietrich and Timo Veijola have agreed on the presence of a prophetic redaction in the David narrative; however, they place this redaction after Dtr. Veijola has further suggested that it was the nomistic redactor proposed by Smend (his DtrN) who added the negative view of monarchy and emphasis on obedience to the law present in the text of Samuel.

complex took the general shape of its final form. As indicated above, I also think that the bulk of the David Narrative was put together at some point before Dtr, who then could include this narrative complex into the larger DtrH corpus without having to make major emendations. Though I remain undecided as to the date and origin of this editorial/redactional activity, I find the argument for attributing it to a northern prophetic school compelling.

Assumed in the Prophetic Redaction hypothesis, like the theory of DtrH, is that these editors relied upon earlier sources. Scholars usually divide the material about David ranging from 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 into two large narrative complexes, one pertaining to David's rise to power as king over Israel and Judah, known as "The History of David's Rise," and the other recounting the events of his reign and succession, often referred to as "The Succession Narrative." We now turn to the discussions surrounding each of these hypothesized sources.

### *Early Models*

Already during the nineteenth century CE Julius Wellhausen identified two narrative sources within Samuel—the first describing the story of David's rise to the throne and his main achievements (1 Sam 16-2 Sam 8) and the second recounting David's later years as king, Absalom's revolt, and Solomon's succession to the throne (2 Sam 9-20 and 1 Kgs 1-2).<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Wellhausen identified two strata in 1 Samuel, and he posited that the earlier of the two had a favorable view of monarchy while the

---

<sup>61</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1973), 262-269; repr. of *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Enzies, with preface by W. Robertson Smith; Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885); trans. of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1883); and *Die Composition des Hexateuch und der Historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963; orig. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1889), 247-60.

later (post-exilic) stratum held a negative outlook.<sup>62</sup> These observations by Wellhausen have formed critical components of much of the discussions surrounding the composition history of Samuel and continue to remain significant topics in scholarly thinking on Samuel.<sup>63</sup>

In the early twentieth century, form criticism began to replace source criticism as the prevailing method in biblical studies. Building upon the work of Wellhausen, Hermann Gunkel and especially Hugo Gressman applied form criticism to show the composite nature of the text of Samuel, focusing on the evolution of smaller literary units into larger, more sophisticated genres that were eventually combined editorially at a later date.<sup>64</sup> For example, Gressman regards the early stories of Saul and David as heroic tales but argues that the narratives pertaining to David's reign have transformed into novellas due to increased centralization and organization as a result of the establishment of monarchy in Israel.<sup>65</sup>

### *The Succession Narrative*

Perhaps the most influential contribution to understanding the development of the text of Samuel came in 1926 from Leonhard Rost, who argued for the literary unity of 2

---

<sup>62</sup> Another tendency of scholars at the time was to assign sections of Samuel to Pentateuchal sources J and E.

<sup>63</sup> As John Van Seters aptly remarks, "it is quite remarkable how Julius Wellhausen set out in a few pages in the *Prolegomena* the main features for the critical study of the David narratives that were to become the basis for the development of future research by generations of scholars down to recent times" (*Saga of King David*, 4).

<sup>64</sup> Hermann Gunkel, "Die israelitische Literature," in *Die orientalischen Literaturen* (ed. P. Hinneber; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Berlin: Teubner, 1925), 53-112; Hugo Gressmann, "The Oldest History Writing in Israel," in *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressmann and Other Scholars 1906-1923* (ed. David M. Gunn; JSOTSup 116; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), 9-58; Wilhelm Caspari, "The Literary Type and Historical Value of 2 Samuel 15-20," in *Narrative and Novella in Samuel*, 59-88.

<sup>65</sup> Gressman, "Oldest History Writing," 16-18.

Samuel 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2 based on their shared theme of the succession to David's throne.<sup>66</sup> Though he also used form criticism in his analysis, Rost claimed that, instead of being combined *novellen*, the prevailing view at the time, these texts formed a cohesive literary composition written by a single author, which he called the *Thronfolgegeschichte*, or Succession Narrative (SN). With the basic text of 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2, Rost also included 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23, Michal's argument with David, and 2 Samuel 7:11b, 16, portions of Nathan's oracle to David of an everlasting dynasty. According to Rost, the theme of succession is most clearly articulated near the end of the corpus in the questions posed to David from Bathsheba and Nathan in 1 Kings 1:20; 27, respectively: "Who will sit upon the throne of my lord, the king, after him?" (*mî yēšēb 'al kissē' 'ādonî-hammelek 'aḥrāyw*). The end of the SN was easily identified by David's death and Solomon's succession in 1 Kings 2, which, in Rost's view, served as both climax and conclusion to the Succession Narrative. Rost further identified the presence of an Ark Narrative within the books of Samuel (1 Sam 4:1b-18a, 19-21, 5:1b, 12, 6:1-3b, 4, 10-14, 16, 6:19-7:1; 2 Sam 6:1-15, 17-20a), and he argued that the account of David's argument with Michal at the end of the procession of the Ark into Jerusalem was the link between the two narratives.<sup>67</sup> Rost dated the SN to the reign of Solomon and regarded the author as a member of the royal court writing "*in majorem gloriam Salomonis*—to the greater glory of Solomon."<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn; Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship 1; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982); trans. of *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1926).

<sup>67</sup> Rost, *Succession*, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Rost, *Succession*, 105.

Martin Noth incorporated Rost's proposal into his own work and claimed that the Ark Narrative and the Succession Narrative were sources that Dtr included in the DtrH.<sup>69</sup> The most influential form of Rost's theory appeared in the work of Gerhard von Rad, who stressed the theological and historiographic importance of the SN.<sup>70</sup> For nearly half a century, Rost's proposal was accepted as the prevailing view for scholarly work on the David Narrative. More recently, however, Rost's ideas have been increasingly questioned and even rejected, though his hypothesis still remains the starting point for studies of the composition history of the books of Samuel.

### *Criticism of the Succession Narrative*

One of the main critical discussions surrounding Rost's theory of a Succession Narrative involves the question of the intention of the author (or *Tendenz*), specifically whether the composition was in support of David and Solomon or a polemic against these kings. Rost had thought that the SN was written in support of Solomon, and this view represents the majority opinion.<sup>71</sup> However, another, primarily European, contingent of scholars have argued instead that the SN's outlook was opposed to David and Solomon. As evidence, they cite the account of David's reprehensible behavior in the Bathsheba-Uriah episode (2 Sam 11:2-12:25), the portrayal of David during Absalom's revolt (2

---

<sup>69</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 54.

<sup>70</sup> Gerhard von Rad, "The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 166-204.

<sup>71</sup> For example, see T. C. G. Thornton, "Solomonic Apologetic in Samuel and Kings," *CQR* 169 (1968): 159-166; R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9-20; 1 Kings 1 and 2* (SBT II/9; Naperville, Ill: Allenson, 1968), 19-47; James W. Flanagan, "Court History or Succession Document? A Study of 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2," *JBL* 91 (1972): 172-181; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (ConBOT 8; Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 30; McCarter, "'Plots, True or False': The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic," *Int* 35 (1981): 355-367; idem, *II Samuel*, 9-16; Stefan Seiler, *Geschichte von der Thronfolge Davids (2 Sam 9-20; 1 Kön 1-2): Untersuchungen zur Literaturkritik und Tendenz* (BZAW 267; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 299-313; Jeremy Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 184-186.

Sam 13-19), and the palace intrigue and subsequent bloodbath that surround the succession of Solomon (1 Kgs 1-2). This viewpoint was first espoused by Lienhard Delekat in 1967,<sup>72</sup> but he was later followed by other scholars, most notably Ernst Würthwein, Timo Veijola, and François Langlamet, who came to be known collectively as the *Tendenz* critics.<sup>73</sup> The *Tendenz* critics applied detailed literary criticism to the SN and argued for the presence of more than one source to explain the contradiction of having seemingly both pro- and anti-Solomonic evidence within the Succession Narrative. Their resulting argument was that an original anti-Davidic/Solomonic document underwent significant pro-Davidic redaction.<sup>74</sup>

John Van Seters also proposes a model for the SN (though he prefers the label “Court History”) based on *Tendenz*. He follows Rost in regarding the unity of Dtr’s narrative corpus, viewing it as the work of a single author. However, he regards the Dtr strands, which are pro-David, as the earliest composition of the SN. Instead of Dtr incorporating narrative blocks for the SN, Van Seters posits that a later narrative complex, which he calls the David Saga, was added to the Dtr account. He argues that such an unflattering depiction of David would never have been accepted by Dtr.

---

<sup>72</sup> Lienhard Delekat, “Tendenz und Theologie der David-Salomo-Erzählung,” in *Das ferne und nahe Wort: Festschrift Leonard Rost zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 30. November gewidmet* (ed. Fritz Maass; BZAW 105; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1967), 26-36. This emphasis on the negative aspects of David and Solomon was not entirely new. See R. Kittel (*A History of the Hebrews* II [trans. H. W. Hogg, E. B. Speirs; London: Theological Translation Library VI, 1898], 177-182).

<sup>73</sup> Ernst Würthwein, *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids—theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* (ThSt B 115; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974), 7-59; Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, 16-30; François Langlamet, “Pour ou contre Salomon? La rédaction prosalomonienne de 1 Rois i-ii,” Parts 1-2, *RB* 83 (1976): 321-79; 481-528.

<sup>74</sup> See Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), esp. 34-52; cf. also his earlier works, *In Search of History*, 264-77; and “The Court History and DtrH,” in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids* (ed. Albert de Pury and Thomas Römer; OBO 176; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2000), 70-93.

Therefore, he dates the composition of the David Saga to the Persian period and regards it as a fictional work of “serious entertainment” with the purpose of criticizing the institution of monarchy. He claims that the David Saga interacts with Dtr’s ideological presentation of David but instead gives a sarcastic reinterpretation critical of monarchy.

As indicated by the redaction criticism employed by the *Tendenz* critics, significant questions have also been raised regarding the unity of the Succession Narrative. A main criticism is that, while 1 Kings 1-2 is certainly concerned about the succession to the throne of David, the rest of the so-called “Succession Narrative” does not seem to have succession as its overriding focus. For example, a large portion of the narrative is devoted to recounting the quelling of a revolt led by David’s son Absalom (2 Sam 13-19). Rost himself acknowledged this situation, saying that some portions were directly concerned with David’s successor while others should be categorized as “background to the succession”.<sup>75</sup> In an article published in 1972, James Flanagan argued for an earlier Court History underlying the SN.<sup>76</sup> Several other scholars followed in a similar vein and called for separating 1 Kings 1-2 from the rest of Rost’s SN.<sup>77</sup> They argued that while 1 Kings 1-2 does specifically concern succession, the rest of the

---

<sup>75</sup> Rost, *Succession Narrative*, 73.

<sup>76</sup> James W. Flanagan, “Court History or Succession Document,” 172-181.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp (“Theme and Motif in the Succession History [2 Sam XI 2ff] and the Yahwistic Corpus,” in *Volume du Congrès Genève, 1965* [VTSup 15; Leiden: Brill, 1966], 46-47) argues for distinguishing between strands focused on legitimating David’s own claim from those concerned with David’s succession; Charles Conroy regards the account of Absalom’s revolt as a narrative unity but separates this from the rest of Rost’s proposed SN (*Absalom! Absalom! Narrative and Language in 2 Sam 13-20* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978]); McCarter also separates 1 Kings 1-2 as having the components of royal apologetic proper and 2 Sam 13-20 as a separate literary unity, though he also regards the rest of the SN as apologetic in tone (“Plots, True or False,” *II Samuel*, 9-16); Gillian Keys sees the SN as 2 Sam 10-20 (*The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the ‘Succession Narrative’* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]); Hutton is also in this group, regarding 1 Kings 1-2 as part of the Solomonic royal apology, and separate from the rest of the material, the Court History (*Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 186-188).



material forms its own literary unity, whether as a Court History or as a narrative of Absalom's revolt. Yet still other scholars have given up the idea of a Succession Narrative altogether, rejecting the argument for literary unity among these narratives.<sup>78</sup>

### *The History of David's Rise*

So far, I have been discussing texts in 2 Samuel that depict David as king, but there are also many stories about David, mostly located in 1 Samuel, that are set in the time before he becomes king and narrate his ascent to power over Judah and Israel. This block of material is often referred to as the History of David's Rise (HDR). For most of the twentieth century, the bulk of scholarly discussions on the composition history of Samuel has focused on the Succession Narrative, leaving the HDR somewhat neglected by comparison, but this trend has changed in recent decades. Leonhard Rost was also instrumental in identifying the HDR as a discrete narrative complex consisting of 1 Samuel 16:14 to 2 Samuel 5,<sup>79</sup> but he did not provide a detailed discussion of the HDR. Therefore the classic treatment of the HDR is usually attributed to Jakob Grønbeck, who argued that the parameters of the narrative complex were 1 Samuel 15:1—2 Samuel 5:10. Grønbeck regarded the HDR as a compilation of disparate traditional material organized

---

<sup>78</sup> The first rejection of Rost's Succession Narrative was by R. A. Carlson, *David the Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964), but his view was largely ignored. Fourteen years later, David M. Gunn also declaimed Rost's idea of a SN (*The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* [JSOTSup 6; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978]); J. P. Fokkelman stated that the Succession Narrative theory "has crippled OT science for almost 50 years" (*Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, Vol. 1: King David* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981]); Steven L. McKenzie also rejects the SN, saying that it is a creation of Dtr who utilized various sources/accounts ("The So-Called Succession Narrative in the Deuteronomistic History," in *Die Sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids: neue Einsichten und Anfragen* [eds. Albert de Pury; Thomas Römer [Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000], 123-35).

<sup>79</sup> Rost, *Succession*, 8, with n.12; 105; 109-112.

into a literary unity by an author/editor living in Jerusalem soon after the secession of the Northern Kingdom of Israel from Judah (ca. 906-883 BCE).<sup>80</sup>

*The History of David's Rise as Royal Apologetic*

In his influential commentaries on Samuel as well as in several journal articles, Kyle McCarter argued for the literary unity of the HDR as royal apologetic.<sup>81</sup> McCarter views the HDR as a single composition to which later accretions were added and whose purpose was to justify the legitimacy of David's succession in place of the Saulides as ruler over Israel as well as Judah.<sup>82</sup> McCarter compares the HDR to other examples of ancient Near Eastern royal apologetic, particularly the thirteenth-century BCE "Apology of Hattušiliš"<sup>83</sup> and argues that the HDR fits within this category of ancient Near Eastern literature.<sup>84</sup> He states, "The HDR shares this apologetic tone, taking note of specific historical developments, justifying David's part in them, and attributing everything

---

<sup>80</sup> Jakob Grønbeck, *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (I Sam 15-2 Sam 5): Tradition und Komposition* (ATDan 10; Copenhagen: Muksgaard, 1971), 259-278. See also Artur Weiser, "Die Legitimation des Königs David. Zur Eigenart und Entstehung der sogen. Geschichte von Davids Aufstieg," *VT* 16 (1966): 325-354; Roger L. Ward, "The Story of David's Rise: A Tradition-historical Study of I Samuel xvi 14-II Samuel v," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1967).

<sup>81</sup> McCarter, *I Samuel*, esp. 27-30; "Apology of David," *JBL* 99 (1980): 489-504; "Plots, True or False," *II Samuel*, esp. 9-16; "The Historical David," *Int* 40 (1986): 117-129.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Weiser, "Legitimation des Königs David," 271-273.

<sup>83</sup> For the text, see KUB I 1 + KBo III 6. The standard edition is Heinrich von Otten, *Die Apologie Hattusilis III: das Bild der Überlieferung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981); for an English translation, see van den Hout, *COS* 1.77.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Harry A. Hoffner, "Propaganda and Political Justification in Hittite Historiography," in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (eds. H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1975) 49-62; also, Herbert M. Wolf, "The Apology of Hattušiliš Compared with Other Political Self-Justifications of the Ancient Near East" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1967); and Andrew Knapp, "Royal Apology in the Ancient Near East" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2012). Knapp argues that royal apologetic should not be regarded as a distinct literary genre with formal characteristics but rather a rhetorical position that is transhistorical by nature.

finally to the divine will.”<sup>85</sup> Specifically, McCarter views the purpose of the HDR as defending David against severe accusations, such as attempting to usurp Saul’s throne, deserting Saul’s court, being an outlaw, being a Philistine mercenary, and being responsible for the deaths of Saul, Abner, and Ishba‘al.<sup>86</sup> According to McCarter, the HDR is the earliest of all the narrative sources about David, dating most likely to David’s own lifetime, when these accusations would have been most vigorous. He focused on the specificity of the supposed accusations against David, pointing out that most of the accusations would have lost their importance even within a century after David’s death. McCarter’s view of the HDR as royal apologetic continues to have many adherents.<sup>87</sup>

### *Two-source Theories for the History of David’s Rise*

In the late nineteenth century, scholars had posited two or even three independent narrative strands in 1 Samuel to account for the presence of several sets of doublets (e.g. 1 Sam 18:10-11 // 19:9-10) and David’s three introductions (1 Sam 16:1-13, 16:14-23, 17:12-14).<sup>88</sup> As mentioned above, Wellhausen identified one strand as earlier and in support of monarchy (1 Sam 9:1-10,16; 13-14) while the later strand presented a critical

---

<sup>85</sup> McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> McCarter, “Apology of David,” 499-502.

<sup>87</sup> For example, see Frederick H. Cryer, “David’s Rise to Power and the Death of Abner: An Analysis of 1 Samuel xxvi 14-16 and Its Redaction-Critical Implications,” *VT* 35 (1985): 385-394; Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 57-72; Steven L. McKenzie, *King David*, especially pp. 35-36; Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 218-227; Michael B. Dick, “The ‘History of David’s Rise to Power’ and the Neo-Babylonian Succession Apologies,” in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts* (eds. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 3-19; Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*; Knapp, “Royal Apologetic.”

<sup>88</sup> Some traced the strands to the same sources for Pentateuch while others placed them at different cultic centers. For references, see Halpern, *Constitution of the Monarchy*, 149, with 339, n.1-2; Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 231.

view of kingship (1 Sam 7-8; 10:17-27; 12).<sup>89</sup> Throughout much of the twentieth century CE, however, the prevailing view regarding HDR understood this work to be a single, loosely-organized collection of traditional material. The view of HDR as a single unit held sway until the final two decades of the century, when some scholars began to shift toward a two-source model for HDR.

Beginning in the 1980s, some scholars began to rearticulate the earlier view exemplified by Wellhausen, utilizing the various doublets in 1 Samuel to discern more than one continuous strand of narrative underlying HDR.<sup>90</sup> In 1981 Baruch Halpern argued for two coherent and continuous sources, which he deemed Source A and B.<sup>91</sup> The A source, which Halpern regards as the earlier of the two, is primarily concerned with Saul and Samuel with only a secondary interest in David. It depicts Saul as a deliverer similar to the book of Judges, and ends with Saul's death at Mt. Gilboa.<sup>92</sup> In the B source, by contrast, it is Samuel and then David who are primarily emphasized, and this source ends with David's becoming king over Judah and Israel and connects to the Court History/Succession Narrative.<sup>93</sup> Similar to Halpern, both Anton van der Lingen

---

<sup>89</sup> Wellhausen, *Composition des Hexateuchs*, 240-246.

<sup>90</sup> For a more thorough overview of the two-source hypotheses, see Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 235-245, esp. 235-239.

<sup>91</sup> Baruch Halpern, *Constitution of the Monarchy*, 149-174.

<sup>92</sup> Halpern's Source A: 1 Samuel 9:1-10:13; 13:(2-3) 4-14:51 (52); 17:12-30 (31), 41, 48b, 50, 55-58; 18:1-5(6a), 10-11, 17-19, 30; 20:1b-42; 21:1-24:23; 28:3-25; 31

<sup>93</sup> Halpern's Source B: 1 Samuel 8; 10:17-27; 11-12; 15-16; 17:1-11, 32-40, 42-48a, 49, 51-54; 18:(6a)6b-9, 12-16, 20-29; 19; 25-27; 28:1-2; 29-30; 2 Sam 1ff.

and François Langlamet also proposed models in which originally independent documents were combined and then were subjected to several layers of redaction.<sup>94</sup>

In contrast, later proposals positing two sources in 1 Samuel have tended to argue for the primacy of one strand of texts over the other. For example, Ina Willi-Plein has argued for a differentiation of sources based on Saul's children Michal and Jonathan. According to her view, the material that includes Michal is foundational to the larger narrative and dates to a time when kingship was not necessarily hereditary, whereas the Jonathan texts are later additions in which hereditary monarchy is presupposed.<sup>95</sup>

*Jeremy Hutton*

A recent comprehensive treatment of the composition history of the books of Samuel is by Jeremy Hutton, who presents a model for the development of a pre-Dtr Samuel in *The Transjordanian Palimpsest* (2009). Hutton sees the texts of the traditional Succession Narrative as not originally unified but as a specifically Solomonic apologia (2 Sam 11:1-12:25 and 1 Kgs 1-2) added to an early account of Absalom's revolt that, once combined, together make up a larger narrative argument in support of Solomon's line. He calls this corpus the Solomonic Succession Narrative and dates it to the time of Rehoboam's accession, viewing its purpose as a royal Judahite attempt at political

---

<sup>94</sup> Anton van der Lingen, *David en Saul in I Samuel 16-II Samuel 5: verhalen in politiek en religie* (Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1983), 240-243; François Langlamet, "De 'David, fils de Jessé' au 'Livre de Jonathan': Deux éditions divergentes de l' 'Ascension de David' en 1 Sam 16-2 Sam 1?" *RB* 100 (1993): 321-357; idem, "'David—Jonathan—Saül' ou le 'livre de Jonathan': 1 Sam 16, 14-2 Sam 1,27," *RB* 101 (1994): 326-354.

<sup>95</sup> Ina Willi-Plein, "1 Sam 18-19 und die Davidshausgeschichte," in *David und Saul im Widerstreit—Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit: Beiträge zur Auslegung des ersten Samuelbuches*, (ed. Walter Dietrich; OBO 206; Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 138-171. In an earlier article, Otto Kaiser essentially argued the opposite of Willi-Plein, suggesting that the Michal texts are additional ("David und Jonathan. Tradition, Redaktion und Geschichte in 1 Sam 16-20: Ein Versuch," *ETL* 66 [1990]: 281-296).

apologetic that ultimately failed to gain the adherence of Israel.<sup>96</sup> Hutton argues that this document continued to accrue more narratives for a time,<sup>97</sup> before becoming incorporated into the Prophetic Redaction and subsequently the DtrH, both of which added sets of insertions, but not narrative complexes.

Regarding the HDR, Hutton, following Willi-Plein's observations, has also argued for a division of the HDR according to Saul's children, positing an earlier HDR (HDR<sup>1</sup>) containing material about Michal and a later HDR (HDR<sup>2</sup>) which was focused on Jonathan. According to his view, the later HDR source (HDR<sup>2</sup>) containing the Jonathan material was joined to the Solomonic Succession Narrative (see above) while the earlier HDR (HDR<sup>1</sup>) containing the Michal stories became combined with to the narratives about Saul. Hutton suggests these two separate narrative complexes were merged into a continuous whole at the time of the Prophetic Redaction.<sup>98</sup> In Hutton's view, the Prophetic Redaction sought either to justify Jehu's kingship over Israel, which would suggest a date in the late ninth century BCE, or to anticipate the end of the Jehu's dynasty, suggestive of a date in the mid-eighth century BCE.

Hutton's discussion of the composition history of Samuel has been very influential for the shaping of my own ideas regarding the development of the David Narrative. In general, I agree with Hutton's argument for the composition history of much of 2 Samuel (his Solomonic Succession Narrative), though not every detail. For example, I am less confident than Hutton for such an early date for written texts. Though

---

<sup>96</sup> Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 186-187.

<sup>97</sup> For example, what Hutton terms the "Benjaminite episodes" involving Ishbaal, Abner, and Meribbaal (2 Sam 2-4; 9; 16:1-14; 19:17-41).

<sup>98</sup> Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 260-288.

not necessarily opposed to such an argument, I think much of this material could have survived in oral form for some time. I do, however, think the complexity of development Hutton illustrates so well in his argument probably reflects the situation historically and demonstrates the inherent difficulties facing source-critical approaches.

### *Concluding Remarks*

In this study, my use of the term “David Narrative” encompasses both the traditional History of David’s Rise and Succession Narrative. As I hope the preceding discussion indicates, by preferring to use the term David Narrative, I am not challenging the idea that there are separate source materials making up 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2 but only intend to suggest that, once combined, these compositional sources together tell a complete story of the rise, reign, death, and succession of King David.

### Succession Narrative

With the growing consensus of contemporary scholarship, I am also of the opinion that the term “Succession Narrative” only properly applies to the material in 1 Kings 1-2, Solomon’s rather unlikely succession to David and an explanation/apologia for the ensuing bloodbath that occurred in the early part of his reign. As to the rest of the material attributed to the “Succession Narrative,” I do not regard these narratives as a literary unity but rather as several smaller narrative complexes that were combined at a relatively early date in the formation of the David Narrative. The most significant of these corpora is the account of Absalom’s revolt, which, by itself, indicates several layers of editorial/redactional activity.<sup>99</sup> Concerning the *Tendenz* of the texts of the

---

<sup>99</sup> An original core account of Absalom’s rebellion and David’s victory seems to have attracted additional material, such as David’s Transjordanian flight and return (2 Sam 15:13-16:14, 17:24-29; 19:16-41), a prologue containing 2 Samuel 13-14, and, at some later point, the Solomon narratives of 2 Samuel 11-12

traditional “Succession Narrative” and whether they are in support of or a polemic against David, I find all of the material to be pro-David, even texts that seem to admit wrongdoing or weakness on David’s part, such as 2 Samuel 11-12 or much of the Absalom revolt narrative.<sup>100</sup> These texts still serve in support, and perhaps even in defense of David, similarly to the HDR.<sup>101</sup> However, the type of defense employed by the narratives of David’s reign and succession differ markedly from the HDR.

### History of David’s Rise

I agree with arguments for at least two sources within the HDR and more than likely a few supplementary episodes as well. Whoever combined them did so painstakingly but did not choose between contradictory accounts (e.g., 1 Sam 17). Moreover, like Willi-Plein and Hutton, I see the Jonathan and Michal traditions as originally separate and regard the Michal material as probably the earlier of the two. Once combined, however, these narratives make an even stronger case for David’s legitimacy. Furthermore, following McCarter, I think that viewing the HDR as using apologetic rhetoric on analogy with other ancient Near Eastern royal justifications is a helpful way to understand the material, which is clearly pro-David. While the sources

---

(at least in part) and 1 Kings 1-2. Cf. the similar view of Kratz, *Composition of the Narrative Books*, 175; and Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 222 (though we differ on 2 Samuel 13-14).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Kratz, (*Composition*, 176), who says, “Only in a later stage of the tradition and in accordance with our moral sensibility shaped by it is the Bathsheba episode regarded as a transgression (2 Sam 12) and does Solomon’s brutal action against his rivals in the royal family need to be justified by the testament of David in 1 Kgs 2.5-9. Rather, both, like the Absalom cycle in 2 Sam 13-20, are interested only in the turbulence in the royal family, a good story and all in all the legitimation of the Davidic dynasty.”

<sup>101</sup> On the narrative tension this creates in 2 Samuel, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 15-16.



behind the HDR were probably also apologetic in nature, the editor who combined them is the one responsible for shaping the argument for David's legitimacy.<sup>102</sup>

Regarding the relative date of the HDR, in its combined form I think it probably dates later than the "Succession Narrative," though some of the sources or accounts it uses could be contemporaneous with or even earlier than the earliest episodes of the "Succession Narrative." In particular, I hypothesize that the stories of David at Saul's court (1 Sam 16:14-20) date relatively later than other sections of the HDR.<sup>103</sup>

### Dating the David Narrative

As is probably apparent from this brief survey of scholarship on the composition history of the David Narrative, views about the dates of these texts vary widely. While some scholars maintain that the accounts about David come from a time very close to his reign, others date the text of Samuel much later than the events it describes and highly doubt its usefulness for reconstructing the history of the tenth century BCE in Israel and Judah.<sup>104</sup> Specifically dating the text of Samuel is not my goal for this study because the questions that I ask of the text are valid regardless of when it was written. However, because I take seriously the mindset and worldview of the ancient authors, editors, and their intended audiences, it is important to have a general idea of the text's *Sitz im Leben* when analyzing the recurring theme of sexuality in stories about David. The composition of the David Narrative involved a long and complex process of writing and rewriting,

---

<sup>102</sup> This editorial phase probably also had a hand in the shaping of the Saul narratives, which pave the way for David's meteoric rise by presenting the various foibles of the first king of Israel. See Johannes Klein, who argues for a substantial pre-Dtr Saul-David narrative in *David versus Saul: Ein Beitrag zum Erzählsystem der Samuelbücher* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Kratz, *Composition*, 177.

<sup>104</sup> See Knapp ("Royal Apologetic," 339 n. 708) who discusses in a footnote that scholars have a "hierarchy of evidence" in dating a text and those who put "the apologetic mode at or near the top of the hierarchy" tend to see the texts as early and authentic.

additions and revisions, but, as stated above, since I think the basic form of the David Narrative is pre-Dtr, I regard the majority of the David Narrative as reflecting a pre-exilic Judahite setting.

### The Sexuality Motif and the Formation of the David Narrative

Since the material about David is generally attributed to multiple sources combined and redacted by various editors, it is intriguing to see a specific motif attached to the figure of David throughout his rise, reign, and succession. When looking at the placement of episodes relating to sexuality in the David Narrative, one distinction becomes apparent: the episodes that are more explicit about sexual activity take place during David's reign and succession, whereas episodes in which sexuality is assumed or implied tend to occur during David's rise to power.

The narratives in which sexual activity is overtly mentioned, 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, 13:1-22, 16:20-23, and 1 Kings 1:1-4, are located within the traditional confines of the so-called "Succession Narrative." Each episode occurs well after the point in the David Narrative that David assumes power as king over Israel and Judah and connects to one of David's sons. Moreover, all four of these stories are connected, whether directly or indirectly, to the narrative of Absalom's revolt. On the other hand, the narratives in which sex is only assumed, the stories of David's marriages (except for Bathsheba), are all part of the material assigned to the History of David's Rise and occur before he is established as king. The accusations of sexual impropriety, 2 Samuel 3:6-11, 6:16, 2-23, and 1 Kings 2:13-25, are more difficult to identify literarily. Two of these occur in contested boundaries of HDR and SN, while the other takes place after Solomon's succession to David's throne. However, each of these narratives is set shortly after the

accession of the king—Ishba‘al, David, or Solomon—while he is still consolidating power. Overall, the distinction surrounding the sexuality motif in the story of King David suggests a literary-historical division largely in accordance with the large narrative blocks that biblical scholars posit as sources for the David Narrative.

In the preceding discussion of apologetic rhetoric in the David Narrative, I indicated that I find this category to be helpful in understanding the overall position and purpose of the David Narrative. With this in mind, I posit that the sexuality motif in the David Narrative is at some level related to its apologetic function. The stories of David’s wives Michal and Abigail serve the purpose of legitimating David. At other points, such as Ishba‘al’s accusation of Abner and Amnon’s rape of Tamar, sexuality explains ruptured interpersonal relations with important political fallout for David. Though David’s offenses are clearly admitted in the Bathsheba-Uriah episode, his kingship is ultimately upheld. The prevalence of episodes involving sexuality in various nuances throughout the story of King David indicates that the writers of the David Narrative found the sexuality motif a particularly effective literary device for royal justification.

#### ***2.4. Literary-Critical Approaches to the David Narrative***

Although the above discussion has primarily focused on historical-critical studies of the books of Samuel, another method, or rather, a collection of various methodological approaches, analyzes the biblical text from a strictly literary-critical perspective.<sup>105</sup>

Literary-critical studies of the Bible are called variously “rhetorical criticism,” “narrative

---

<sup>105</sup> For surveys and bibliography, see David M. Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, Rev. ed. (eds. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999); David Jasper, “Literary Readings of the Bible,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (ed. J. Barton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21-34.

criticism,” and “New Literary criticism.”<sup>106</sup> Though many literary-critics of the Bible recognize such scholarly constructs as the DtrH, rather than attempting to reconstruct the diachronic development of the text, literary-critical interpretations usually focus on the text’s “final form.” Biblical literary critics tend to downplay items of importance within historical-critical approaches, such as authorial intent, intended audience, and *Sitz im Leben*. Instead, the text is interpreted “in terms primarily of its own story world, seen as replete with meaning.”<sup>107</sup> As literary-critical approaches began to become more common, the place of the reader in the interpretation of a text (reader-response criticism) gained increasing importance, particularly the reader’s own subjectivity, and the premise of an objective reading was given up. Literary-critical approaches to the Bible have tended to interact with developments in modern literary theory and critical theory including structuralist, post-structuralist, deconstructionist, psychoanalytic and feminist criticism, more often than have traditional modes of biblical interpretation, such as the historical-critical method. While a few examples of a literary-critical approach began to appear as early as the late 1960s, this method only began to be more widely practiced in the late 1970s and the 1980s, but by the 1990s literary-critical readings had become a leading method of scholarly biblical interpretation. In particular, the works of Robert Alter,<sup>108</sup> professor of Hebrew language and comparative literature, and literary theorist

---

<sup>106</sup> The term “New Literary Criticism” both connects this approach to the New Criticism literary theory and distinguishes it from the nineteenth-century CE literary criticism exemplified by the work of Julius Wellhausen and other source critics.

<sup>107</sup> Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” 201.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981); see also idem and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

and cultural critic Mieke Bal<sup>109</sup> have been very influential in the development of literary-critical approaches to the Bible.

The books of Samuel seem to have been a favorite topic for literary-critical readings,<sup>110</sup> perhaps because of the “high literary qualities”<sup>111</sup> of many of the stories therein.<sup>112</sup> A number of these studies criticized the unity of the so-called “Succession

---

<sup>109</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009; orig. 1985); *Lethal Love: Feminist Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987); *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre and Scholarship on Sisera's Death* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988); *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” 207.

<sup>111</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, 16.

<sup>112</sup> For example, see already J. J. Jackson, “David's Throne: Patterns in the Succession Story,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 11 (1965): 183-195; G. P. Ridout, “Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 7, 9-10; 1 Kings 1-2) (Ph.D. dsst., Graduate Theological Union, 1971); idem, “The Rape of Tamar” in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (eds. J. J. Jackson and M. Kessler; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974); Walter Brueggeman, “David and His Theologian,” *CBQ* 30 (1968): 156-181; idem, “Kingship and Chaos (A Study in Tenth Century Theology),” *CBQ* 33 (1971): 317-332; idem, “On Trust and Freedom: A Study of Faith in the Succession Narrative,” *Int* 26 (1972): 3-19; idem, “On Coping with a Curse: A Study of 2 Sam 16:5-14,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 175-192; idem, *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, “The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel,” *Semeia* 8 (1977): 15-33; Charles Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*; David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible*, 2 vols. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; JSOTSup 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 12-30; David M. Gunn, *The Story of King David*; idem, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (JSOTSup 14; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980); J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, vols. 1: *King David (II Sam 9-20 & 1 Kings 1-2 and 2: The Crossing Fates (I Sam 13-31 & II Sam 1)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981; 1986); B. O. Long, “Wounded Beginnings: David and Two Sons,” in *Images of Man and God: Old Testament Short Stories in Literary Focus* (ed. Idem; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981), 26-34; idem, “A Darkness between Brothers: Solomon and Adonijah,” *JSOT* 19 (1981): 79-94; Adele Berlin, *Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David's Wives*, *JSOT* 23 (1982): 69-85; Peter D. Miscall, *I Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986); Menachem Perry and Meir Sternberg, “The King Through Irony Eyes: Biblical Narrative and the Literary Reading Process,” *Poetics Today* 7 (1986): 275-322; Joel Rosenberg, *King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986); Gale A. Yee, “‘Fraught with Background’: Literary Ambiguity in II Samuel 11,” *Int* 42 (1988): 240-253; Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art and the Bible* (trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), esp. 239-282; Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1989); James S. Ackerman, “Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2” *JBL* 109 (1990): 41-60; many of the essays in David J. A. Clines and Tamara C. Eskenazi, eds., *Telling Queen Michal's Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation* (JSOTSup 119; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Diana V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSup 121; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Tod Linafelt, “Taking Women in Samuel: Readers/Responses/Responsibility” in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Danna Nolan Fewell; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 99-113; Kurt L. Noll, *The Faces of David*

Narrative” on formal literary grounds and contributed to weakening the hold of Rost’s hypothesis over scholarship on Samuel.<sup>113</sup> These studies contain many valuable insights about the stories within the David Narrative, and as the discussions and footnotes in the following chapters will show, I have relied on their perceptive observations in my own textual analysis.

As one might surmise, there is an inherent tension between a synchronic and a diachronic approach to biblical texts. Literary-critics decry the fracturing of the biblical text in historical-critical scholarship and critique attempts to reconstruct an ancient social context for the text that is so far removed from the contemporary reader. However, the problematic result of this is that literary-critical studies “have tended to minimize the significance of ancient Near Eastern contexts of Israelite culture, not to mention Israelite history in general.”<sup>114</sup> Despite the disparity between historical-critical and literary-critical approaches to the Bible, however, I do not believe they must be mutually exclusive. It is not a matter of “either/or” but rather of “both/and.” The biblical texts are products of many different authors and editors over the span of nearly a millennium;<sup>115</sup> however, their “final form” creates a coherent literary whole and was also intentionally formulated, at the latest during the canonical process but probably earlier through various

---

(JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1997); Ellen White, “Michal the Misinterpreted,” *JSOT* 31 (2007): 451-464; Jan Jaynes Quesada, “King David and Tidings of Death: ‘Character Response’ Criticism,” in *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon. Essays in Honor of David M. Gunn* (eds. Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp, and Timothy Beal; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 3-18; Sara M. Koenig, *Isn’t This Bathsheba? A Study in Characterization* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011).

<sup>113</sup> So especially Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, Gunn, *The Story of King David*, Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*.

<sup>114</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities of Ancient Israel*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids/Dearborn, Mich.: Eerdmans/Dove, 2002), xxv.

<sup>115</sup> Many literary-critical readers of the Bible do recognize this fact, at least nominally, in their work.

redactional processes. Of course, as contemporary readers, we are products of our own socio-cultural context and personal experiences and no interpretation of a given text can be entirely objective. At the same time, however, it is very significant that the biblical texts are products of a culture far removed from our own. The more we know about the history of Israel and the larger ancient Near Eastern cultural milieu of which Israel was a part, the better we can attempt to understand both the assumptions and values inherent within that text as well as our own culturally-conditioned interpretations.

Thus in the following textual analysis, I attempt to combine what I view to be the best components of the historical-critical and literary-critical approaches. I provide a close reading of each narrative more or less in its 'final form' but with an awareness of and sensitivity to the complex composition history behind the text's present state. Also, while certainly not exhaustive, I point out apparent Dtr additions and also cite source-critical discussions of particularly knotty texts in footnotes. Moreover, in these close readings I attempt to situate each narrative in its historical-cultural setting by including philological analysis as well as a discussion of appropriate ancient Near Eastern parallels.

## ***2.5. Feminist Biblical Criticism and the David Narrative***

As in many academic disciplines, the development of feminist critical thought since the 1970s has significantly impacted the field of biblical studies.<sup>116</sup> Feminist

---

<sup>116</sup> One of the earliest groundbreaking works of feminist biblical criticism was Phyllis Trible's *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (OBT 2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). Other early feminist works in theology, such as Mary Daly's, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) and Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), had a major impact on the beginnings of feminist biblical criticism. A few examples of the major feminist biblical scholars include: Athalya Brenner (*The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1985], *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and "Sexuality" in the Hebrew Bible* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], *Are We Amused? Humor about Women in the Biblical Worlds* [New York: T&T Clark, 2003], and editor of the *Feminist Companion to the Bible* series); Claudia V. Camp (*Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* [Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1985]; *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* [Sheffield:

biblical critics have pointed out the androcentrism of both the Bible itself and the way it has traditionally been interpreted. Feminist biblical scholarship has also demonstrated the gender-related problems of taking the biblical text at face value and advocated for approaching the text with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Though characterized by diversity of methodologies, feminist biblical criticism has tended to use a literary-critical rather than a historical-critical approach to biblical interpretation, in part because this was the traditionally dominant method of biblical interpretation feminist critics were seeking to overturn.<sup>117</sup> Feminist biblical scholars have developed techniques for deconstructing the text and highlighting female characters that are often in supplementary or minor narrative roles. Moreover, the position of the reader is critical for feminist criticism, which, like other ideology-based criticism, “makes no pretense of objectivity.”<sup>118</sup> Feminist biblical scholarship has paved the way for investigations from a variety of perspectives about gender in the Bible and the biblical world.

A particular challenge posed for feminist biblical scholars has revolved around the Bible’s role in women’s oppression. Since the Bible is seen by many as a sacred text,

---

Sheffield Academic Press, 2000]); Carol Meyers (*Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988]; *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Ancient Israelite Women* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005]); *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Tikva Frymer-Kensky (*In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* [New York: Free Press, 1992]; *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*; New York: Schocken Books, 2002]); J. Cheryl Exum, (*Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993], *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996]); Phyllis Bird, (*Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997]), Esther Fuchs (*Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* [JSOTSup 310; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000]).

<sup>117</sup> See Sarah Shectman, *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist Source-Critical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 9. She also notes that feminist biblical scholarship, especially of the Hebrew Bible, has been dominated by American scholars but that the situation is changing.

<sup>118</sup> Danna Nolan Fewell, “Feminist Criticism” in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, 269.



it has been argued that it provides support for patriarchy and authorization for the subjugation of women. Thus feminist biblical criticism has tended to have one of two approaches: either to reclaim the Bible for women or to point out biblical texts that are irredeemably detrimental for women. Today, however, such binary positive/negative responses have become less frequent and feminist biblical criticism has developed more complex analyses.<sup>119</sup> In the wake of Third-wave or post-feminism,<sup>120</sup> feminist biblical scholars have begun to look at the category of gender and power dynamics more broadly.

Feminist biblical critics have certainly written on stories found in the David Narrative. However, they have tended to limit their studies to a particular aspect of the text or to specific female characters, usually as part of a larger study of gender in the Hebrew Bible. For example, Phyllis Trible devotes one chapter of *Texts of Terror* to Amnon's rape of Tamar in 2 Sam 13:1-22.<sup>121</sup> In J. Cheryl Exum's *Fragmented Women*, she has a chapter exclusively about Michal, a chapter comparing Michal and Jephthah's daughter, and a chapter comparing Bathsheba and the Levite's concubine in Judges 19.<sup>122</sup> Alice Bach compares the stories of Bathsheba and Tamar in a chapter about the male

---

<sup>119</sup> But see the excellent critique of contemporary feminist biblical scholarship by Esther Fuchs, who especially argues against those scholars who take more positive views of women in the Bible in "Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible for Women: the Neoliberal Turn in Contemporary Feminist Scholarship," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24 (2008): 45-65.

<sup>120</sup> Third-wave feminism, sometimes called post-feminism, began around the mid-1980s. Third-wave feminists criticized binary structures of male/female hierarchy, which had hitherto been assumed in feminist scholarship. Instead Third-wave feminists focused on the structures of power relations and reformulated earlier concepts of sex/gender distinction. Since feminist thinking had been dominated up to this point by white, middle-class women, Third-wave feminists criticized previous foundational concepts such as oppression, patriarchy, and identity as essentialist and not universally applicable. This criticism was furthered by the intersections of feminist scholarship with postmodernism and cultural theory, as well as the increasing amount of scholarship that presents multicultural and post-colonial feminist perspectives (e.g. Womanism, Third-world feminism).

<sup>121</sup> Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 37-64.

<sup>122</sup> J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 16-60; 170-201.

gaze and the silent feminine object within the biblical narrative in *Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*.<sup>123</sup> Esther Fuchs, in *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative* has a chapter on “The Biblical Wife,” where she compares 2 Sam 11-12 with the “matriarch-in-peril” tales in Genesis (Gen 12:10-20; 20; 26:6-11) and also briefly discusses Michal and Abigail. She also includes a chapter on “The Biblical Sister,” where she looks at 2 Samuel 13 and the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34.<sup>124</sup> These examples of feminist biblical criticism, which include some stories from the David Narrative in their wider biblical studies, have certainly contributed significantly to our understanding of the gender disparities and power dynamics surrounding sexuality inherent within the David Narrative. However, the atomistic approach often utilized in feminist biblical scholarship has prevented feminist critics from analyzing the overarching theme of sexuality and how it relates to gender in the David story.

Therefore, in what follows I analyze the connections between sexual activity, gender roles, and the ideology of kingship in the overall David Narrative. I will approach the text from a gendered perspective to present a cultural critique regarding the function of sexuality in the biblical narratives of David (and Solomon). However, I also attempt to understand the interconnections of sex, gender, and kingship within the historical-cultural context of the people who produced these stories.

## ***2.6. Previous Discussions of Sex and the David Narrative***

Since the rise of Third-wave feminism, feminist scholarship more generally has broadened its focus from women to questions of gender and power and this has given rise

---

<sup>123</sup> Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 128-165.

<sup>124</sup> Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, 116-176; 200-224.

to an increased interest in studies of sexuality and the body, topics largely ignored or not taken seriously by previous research. As a result, the attitudes and meanings associated with sexual activity that were once thought to be relatively static over time are now understood by most to be quite changeable, varying diachronically as well as between contemporaneous cultures. The work of philosophers Michel Foucault and Judith Butler have been very influential regarding the academic study of sexuality. Both Foucault and Butler argued that gender and sexuality, rather than being essential biological givens, are linked to social processes of power.<sup>125</sup>

Following the larger trend, sex has also become an increasingly discussed topic within biblical and ancient Near Eastern scholarship, particularly as it relates to issues of gender and power.<sup>126</sup> In this regard the sexual episodes within the David Narrative have certainly not gone unnoticed. For example, the story of David and Bathsheba has received a great deal of attention, not only from scholars and commentators but also from

---

<sup>125</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Vol. I: *An Introduction*; Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*; and Vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*; trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Pantheon, 1978, 1985, 1988); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990, 1999).

<sup>126</sup> Some key examples include the following: For the Bible, see Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959); Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*; idem, *Texts of Terror*; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love*, 1987; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, 187-212; Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hilary B. Lipka, *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006); Michael Coogan, *God and Sex: What the Bible Really Says* (New York: Twelve, 2010); Susanne Scholz, *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Jennifer Wright Knust, *Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire* (New York: HarperOne, 2011). For Mesopotamia, see especially Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting, *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001*, 2 vols. (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002). For ancient Egypt, see especially Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Sex and Gender in Ancient Egypt: 'Don Your Wig for a Joyful Hour'* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2008); and Renata Landgráfová and Hana Navrátilová, *Sex and the Golden Goddess: Ancient Egyptian Love Songs in Context* (Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, 2009).

visual artists, playwrights, and filmmakers. Also, with the advent of disciplines such as queer theory and in light of the larger socio-cultural debates surrounding homosexuality, the relationship between David and Jonathan has been the focus of numerous studies over the last several decades. Bibliography for these and other episodes discussed within this study can be found in the appropriate chapters. However, despite the interest in particular texts relating to sex, there are actually only a few studies that look at sex as a thematic category within a broader context of the David Narrative. To my knowledge, there is no systematic analysis of sexual activity pertaining to the entire David Narrative, and it is my intention for this study to provide such a synthetic treatment.

#### *Sex and the “Succession Narrative”*

Several scholars have pointed out potential connections among four narratives involving sexual offenses within the David Narrative: David’s adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband (2 Sam 11:2-12:25); Amnon’s rape of his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:1-22); Absalom’s usurpation of David’s consorts during his revolt (2 Sam 16:20-23); and Adonijah’s request for marriage to David’s “nurse” Abishag (1 Kgs 2:13-25). Among the various viewpoints discussed below, all agree that these four episodes involving sexual relations “constitute a significant structuring principle”<sup>127</sup> in what is traditionally viewed as the “Succession Narrative.”

#### *The “Woman Who Brings Death”*

In an article published in 1966, Joseph Blenkinsopp argued against the then-prevailing views of the Succession Narrative, claiming that Pentateuchal sources in the

---

<sup>127</sup> Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 17.

historical books had been largely ignored.<sup>128</sup> He determined the parameters of the Succession Narrative as 2 Samuel 11:2-12:15b-25; 13-20; 1 Kings 1-2, which includes David's adultery with Bathsheba, Amnon's rape of Tamar, and the rebellions of Absalom and Adonijah, both of which, he says, "were expressed by" possession or attempted possession of David's concubines.<sup>129</sup> He argues that his version of the Succession Narrative is unified around the theme of "sin externalized in a sexual form which leads to death."<sup>130</sup> In particular, Blenkinsopp focuses on the Bathsheba story in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, which he compares to those in the Yahwist (J) corpus in Genesis, and the most prevalent theme he finds there is also "the woman who brings death," citing especially Genesis 3 and 38. He then discusses the prominence of the theme of the "strange woman" (*zārâ*) in Proverbs bringing death. Blenkinsopp's work was followed by David Gunn, who expanded upon his thematic category, arguing that, beyond Bathsheba, Rizpah, Tamar, and Abishag are all "catalysts" in stories in which not merely one, but two deaths occur.<sup>131</sup>

However, in a 1987 article, John Van Seters argued against the views of Blenkinsopp and Gunn.<sup>132</sup> He acknowledges that sexual love and death coincide within the Succession Narrative, but cogently points out that while in Proverbs the "strange woman" actively leads men to death, in the Succession Narrative each woman is either

---

<sup>128</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Theme and Motif in the Succession History."

<sup>129</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Theme and Motif," 47-48.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>131</sup> Gunn, "Traditional Composition in the 'Succession Narrative,'" *VT* (1976): 214-229; *The Story of King David*, 43.

<sup>132</sup> John Van Seters, "Love and Death in the Court History of David," in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope* (eds. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good; Guilford, Conn.: Four Quarters, 1987), 121-124.

“passive, resists the male’s advances, or her role is unspecified.”<sup>133</sup> Moreover, in each story within the Succession Narrative the woman is entirely uninvolved in the death or deaths that occur. He rightly observes that “it is not the character or behavior of the woman herself that is important but that of the man who loves her” and so instead classifies the motif as “the love or passion of a man for a woman resulting in death.”<sup>134</sup> He cites the closest parallels for this theme in the Homeric poetry of ancient Greece (which happens to fit his view of a late date and epic/saga genre for the David Narrative).

Ken Stone agreed with Van Seters that the implication of the female characters as causing these deaths is incorrect because they are “neither subjects of murder nor subjects of sexual seduction.”<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, Stone critiques the type of thematic analysis, exemplified by Blenkinsopp, that brings together heterogeneous texts and notes only the similarities under the rubric of a particular theme while ignoring the differences. He suggests that a detailed literary analysis of the particular texts would make such a tendentious thematic category disappear. As is probably apparent, I wholeheartedly agree with the critiques raised by Van Seters and Stone. Not only is Blenkinsopp’s interpretation problematic because it results in “blaming the victim” in each of these stories, but his literary analysis and intertextual connections do not hold up. Nevertheless, Blenkinsopp’s article remains important for my study because he was the first to recognize sex as an important literary element within the story of King David.

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>134</sup> Van Seters, “Love and Death,” 122.

<sup>135</sup> Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 17.

### *Private Versus Political*

David Gunn's influential 1978 book *The Story of King David*, already mentioned above, was one of the first to apply a literary-critical approach to the Hebrew Bible and focused on the narratives in which David is king. In his final interpretation, Gunn identified the juxtaposition between the "private" and the "political" as a major theme in the story of David as king. In Gunn's view, the sexual episodes in the so-called "Succession Narrative"<sup>136</sup>—David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2-12:25), Amnon's rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13:1-22), Absalom's seizure of David's consorts (2 Sam 16:20-23), and Adonijah's request of Abishag (1 Kgs 2:13-25)—portray David within his "private" sphere. With many others, he points out that David's adultery with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11-12 reverberates in the sexual offenses of his sons as they struggle to succeed their father's throne. He states that "despite its public and political implications, the key episode in chapters 11-12 is about a private matter...the pattern of intrigue, sex and violence in the Bathsheba episode is played out at length in the subsequent story within David's own family."<sup>137</sup> For Gunn, then, "it is a story about David as king" but also "a story about David the man, about David and his family, about David's own personal or private life."<sup>138</sup> Though Gunn notes that there is certainly a connection between the private and political spheres, he divides David's role as king, where he acquires and rules a kingdom as well as founding a dynasty, from his role as a man, where he is a husband and a father. Gunn's view of the dichotomy between the private

---

<sup>136</sup> Gunn rejects the literary unity of the Succession Narrative but uses its traditional parameters of 2 Sam 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2.

<sup>137</sup> Gunn, *Story of King David*, 89.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

and the political was followed by Kenneth Gros Louis, who argued the entire David Narrative is patterned on the differences between David's public and private actions.<sup>139</sup> Jo Ann Hackett has also noted, alluding to Gunn, that within "the domestic sphere of a ruling family...private decisions have public consequences."<sup>140</sup>

Gunn's "private versus political" dichotomy seems rather outmoded now and also problematically close to the ideology of "separate spheres," which was a product of industrialized European and North American cultures. What was considered "private" or "public" by ancient Israelites and Judahites is not necessarily comparable with modern notions and so it is important to exercise extreme caution when discussing these kinds of subjects. In a 1991 article Regina Schwartz also rejects the relevance for Gunn's juxtaposition of the private and the political:

These are not separate spheres, public and private, that have impact on one another—such a reading would say that the private acts of David have public consequences, that David is torn between private desires and public duties, that David's private affections get in the way of his public role (all of these arguments have been made)—instead, *politics and sexuality are so deeply and complexly integrated as to be one*, and it is anachronistic to even understand them as two different spheres of life.<sup>141</sup>

Schwartz is correct to point out the unfortunate use of the separate spheres dichotomy in Gunn's work; however, Gunn did rightly bring attention to the political importance conferred upon sexual activity within the David Narrative.

Schwartz suggests turning to an anthropological model to explain the undeniable connection between sex and political authority in this significant chapter of Israel's

---

<sup>139</sup> Gros Louis, "The Difficulty of Ruling Well."

<sup>140</sup> Jo Ann Hackett, "1 and 2 Samuel," in *Women's Bible Commentary* (eds. Carol A Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe; Expanded ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 101.

<sup>141</sup> Regina Schwartz, "Adultery in the House of David: The Metanarrative of Biblical Scholarship and the Narratives of the Bible," *Semeia* 54 (1991): 45-46, emphasis added.



history. She herself briefly discusses the socio-economic importance of marriage transactions, though she ultimately connects the relationship between sex and power in the David Narrative to the larger concern about religious fidelity to Yahweh within the Hebrew Bible.

*Ken Stone: Sex, Honor, and Power*

Schwartz's suggestion of an anthropological approach was realized a few years after her article was published. In his 1996 book *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*, Ken Stone used anthropological models and narratological readings of several stories within several DtrH narratives involving sex as a way to elucidate "aspects of the cultural matrix"<sup>142</sup> that produced the biblical texts. Stone argues that "these narratives are structured in relationship to cultural assumptions about sexual activity that involve the quest by males for public honor, power, and prestige."<sup>143</sup> Of the six texts he analyzes, five belong to the David Narrative: 2 Samuel 3:6-11; 11-12; 13; 16:20-23; and 1 Kings 2.<sup>144</sup> Stone identifies three main anthropological concepts which are helpful in elucidating the DtrH narratives involving sexual activity: the relationship between sexual activity, gender, and prestige structures; the emphasis on male contest and female chastity within honor/shame cultures; and the role of the exchange of women in masculine social relations. Throughout his study, Stone stresses the idea of women functioning as conduits of power relationships between men in narrative contexts.

---

<sup>142</sup> Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 11.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> The remaining text is Judges 19.

Stone's analyses of the five episodes identified above have been very influential in the development of my thesis. Moreover, though he does not focus on the history or social contexts of ancient Israel or Judah, his anthropological reading of specific texts is effective as a way of approaching the cultural framework of these passages. As the title of his book suggests, Stone claims to survey stories involving sexual activity in the DtrH; however, all but one of his texts are part of the David Narrative, specifically within the traditional parameters of a "Court History" or "Succession Narrative."<sup>145</sup> Since his study is focused elsewhere, Stone does not recognize the significance of sexuality for the David Narrative specifically. Moreover, because he limits his focus to texts that explicitly deal with sexual activity, he does not address texts in which the power dynamics around sex are more subtle, such as in marriages.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

As the foregoing discussion has shown, most studies on sex in the David Narrative focus on episodes within the traditional "Succession Narrative" that contain references to overt sexual activity. To date, Stone's study is the closest example to a systematic treatment of sex in the David Narrative, but as mentioned above, his focus is the entire DtrH. Thus there is considerable need for a synthetic analysis of the overarching theme of sexuality within the David Narrative, which should include not only stories in which sexual activity occurs but also texts that implicitly relate to sex, such as those that refer to marriages or contain sexual innuendoes. This is what I attempt in the following textual analyses, which I have categorized according to the distinct ways sexuality is presented in the each episode. It is to the first of these, in which sex is assumed in the narratives surrounding David's marriages, to which we now turn.

---

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Steven McKenzie's critique in his review of Stone, *RBL*, January 15, 1998.

## CHAPTER 3

### ASSUMPTIONS AND ALLIANCES, PART 1: DAVID'S MARRIAGES

#### 3.1. Introduction

Among the stories collected about David, quite a number focus on his marriages. Indeed, the political significance and strategic acumen of David's marriages has been previously recognized.<sup>146</sup> Each of David's wives provides political advantages for David in his pursuit of kingship over Israel and Judah that can be elucidated from their presentation in the biblical text. For instance, David is portrayed as marrying women from different regions in both Israel and Judah, which would help solidify his political connections in various areas. The inclusion of so many of David's wives into the David narrative suggests a strong tradition underlies these stories and that these marriages were regarded as important to the presentation of Davidic kingship.

Anthropological studies have long discussed the importance of women as items of exchange in pre-state societies.<sup>147</sup> Marriage connects two families, bringing the bridegroom into covenantal kinship with his wife's relations. Through giving a woman in marriage, men build a network of social kinship, which has been termed by Gayle Rubin as "traffic in women."<sup>148</sup> Rubin has critiqued the "distinction between gift and giver" in this system of exchange, pointing out that the woman involved is "a conduit of a

---

<sup>146</sup> See especially Jon Levenson and Baruch Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Wives," *JBL* 99 (1980): 507-518.

<sup>147</sup> See especially Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham, ed.; rev. ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), but also M. Mauss, *The Gift* (trans. W. D. Halls; New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

<sup>148</sup> Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (ed. R. Reiter; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210.

relationship rather than a partner to it.”<sup>149</sup> Moreover, Ken Stone has argued for applying the anthropological model of women as exchange items to biblical narratives beyond marriages to sexual relationships in general. According to Stone, in this system, “men establish and negotiate their relations with one another through their relations with women.”<sup>150</sup> To describe this system another way, men can create social relations by controlling sexual relations with particular women. One way men can become allied politically is through a sexual union with a certain woman—thus men can gain power through strategic marriages.

Since David is said to have fathered children by all of his wives besides Michal, sexual relations within his marriages must be assumed by the narrative. However, with the exception of Bathsheba, with whom David is initially involved in illicit sex, the portrayals of David’s marriages generally lack any reference to sexual activity or even sexual innuendo.<sup>151</sup> Within the narratives of David’s rise to kingship over Israel and Judah, sex, even for the sake of begetting children, is not the focus of David’s marriages. Rather political advancement is at the core of the stories featuring David’s wives.

Marriage alliances seem particularly positive in the literary portrayal of Davidic kingship compared with narrative presentations of other monarchs in ancient Israel and Judah. Though the name of Saul’s wife is recorded, no stories of Saul’s marriage have survived.<sup>152</sup> In the book of Kings, on the other hand, kings’ wives generally appear in a

---

<sup>149</sup> Rubin, 174.

<sup>150</sup> Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 47.

<sup>151</sup> Though Michal’s deception in 1 Samuel 19:11-17 involves what is presumably a marriage bed and Abigail is described as “beautiful” (*wiypat tō’ar*) in 1 Samuel 25:3.

<sup>152</sup> Saul’s consort (*pīlegeš*) Rizpah will feature in 2 Samuel 3:6-11 and 21:10-14, but both of these episodes take place after Saul’s death.

negative light—Solomon’s foreign wives and concubines, Ahab’s wife Jezebel, and Jehoram of Judah’s wife Athaliah promote religious apostasy (1 Kgs 11:1-8, 16:31-33, 18:4, 13, 19, 19:1-2, 21:25-26; 2 Kgs 8:16-29).<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, Jezebel and Athaliah abuse their royal powers: Jezebel has a man falsely accused and executed so that the king can seize his desirable land (1 Kgs 21), and Athaliah usurps the throne after the death of her husband (2 Kgs 11).<sup>154</sup> In contrast, not one of David’s wives is presented as religiously problematic<sup>155</sup> even though he married some foreign women (Ma‘acah of Geshur, 2 Sam 3:3, and possibly the women from Jebusite Jerusalem, 2 Sam 5:13). David’s wife Abigail, who prognosticates that Yahweh will make David king, is even presented as having been sent by Yahweh (1 Sam 25:32). Furthermore, during David’s rise to power, the narratives involving David’s wives show them as voluntarily allying themselves with David and assisting him during critical moments in his quest for the throne: Michal helps David escape from Saul (1 Sam 19:11-17); Abigail recognizes that David will become king and prevents him from committing bloodguilt (1 Sam 25); and Abigail and Ahinoam join David as he travels to Hebron where he is made king (2 Sam 2:1-4). At the end of David’s reign, his wife Bathsheba plays an instrumental role in Solomon’s succession to the throne (1 Kgs 1:11-31).

---

<sup>153</sup> Also, Asa of Judah deposes his mother Ma‘acah, presumably the wife of his father Abijam, from the rank of queen mother for the worship of Asherah (1 Kgs 15:12-13).

<sup>154</sup> An exception to this trend is Jeroboam I’s wife, who is not necessarily a negative character herself. However, she is the recipient of a negative prophecy concerning her son and Jeroboam’s dynasty, which she inevitably brings to fruition by returning home (1 Kgs 14:1-18).

<sup>155</sup> David refutes Michal’s criticism of the Ark procession (2 Sam 6:16; 20-23), indicating a critical view of Michal, but she is nevertheless presented as a loyal Yahwist.

The majority of the material involving David's marriages is part of the narrative traditions of David's rise to power incorporated in the HDR. Several of David's wives—Michal, Abigail, and Bathsheba—stand out as strong narrative characters. Yet others are only mentioned briefly, and some are even unnamed. Most of the following discussion will focus on the narrative presentations of David and his wives, though I also reference and discuss a list of David's sons (2 Sam 3:2-5) that includes the names of their mothers, David's wives. For the sake of clarity, I organize the following discussion in much the same way as the David Narrative in Samuel, tracing David's marriages along his ascendance to kingship from David's early days in Saul's court, to roaming the wilderness of Judah as a fugitive, and, finally, as king over Judah and Israel.

### **3.2. Saul's Daughters**

#### **3.2.1 Merab: 1 Samuel 18:17-19**

The first time the subject of marriage is brought up in the David narrative, the marriage fails to come to fruition. In one version of the Goliath story,<sup>156</sup> David, who is

---

<sup>156</sup> As suggested by others, 1 Samuel 16-18, especially the account of David's defeat of Goliath, is of a composite nature. The MT's 1 Samuel 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-58; 18:1-5, 10-11, 17-19, 29b-30 are not included in LXX<sup>B</sup> and seem to reflect an alternative account. For further discussion, see Samuel Driver (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel: With an Introduction on Hebrew Palaeography and the Ancient Versions, and Facsimiles of Inscriptions* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1890], 108) who proposed that the shorter LXX version reflects an abridgement of an originally longer Hebrew text. (Wellhausen is also credited with this view but Lust, "The Story of David and Goliath," below, points out that his ideas shift among his publications.) This view has been followed by Dominique Barthélemy, et al., *The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism: Papers of a Joint Research Venture* (OBO 73; Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1986), which presents a dialogue between different views; Alexander Rofé, "The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (eds. J. Neusner, B. Levine, and E. Frerichs; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 117-151; Arie van der Kooij, "The Story of David and Goliath: The Early History of Its Text," *ETL* 68 (1992): 118-31; and Walter Dietrich, "Die Erzählung von David und Goliath in I Sam 17" *ZAW* 108 (1996): 172-191.

The opposite view, that the MT is an expanded text that includes an alternative account and the LXX reflects an older text, is argued by G. B. Caird, *The First and Second Books of Samuel* (IB. Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), 857; Hans Joachim Stoebe, "Die Goliathperikope 1 Sam. XVII 1-XVIII 5 und die Textform der Septuaginta," *VT* 6 (1956): 397-413; Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (trans. John S. Bowden; OTL; London: SCM, 1964. Repr. Philadelphia: Westminster, n.d. Translation of *Die Samuelbücher*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. DATD 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 146-148; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 299-309; Ralph W. Klein, *I Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 173-175; Julio

previously unknown to Saul,<sup>157</sup> has come to a battle against the Philistines to bring provisions for his brothers. While there, he hears from the soldiers that King Saul will reward whoever kills the Philistine champion Goliath with great riches, marriage to the king's daughter, and exemption from taxes or other obligations to the king for the man's entire family (1 Sam 17:25). Saul has included his daughter as part of the reward because, like enrichment and exemption from national obligations like taxes, marriage to the king's daughter would place the victor in a position of power throughout his life and would enhance the position of the man's descendants. Thus a feat of bravery would propel the victor and his family into a completely different social class, part of which includes kinship with the king via marriage. Indeed, David asks the soldiers to repeat the reward for the victor, though he deftly includes pious indignation at the Philistine so that he does not seem self-interested (1 Sam 17:26). It would seem, then, that marriage to the king's daughter is already of interest to an ambitious young David. Though David defeats Goliath, no mention is made of his marrying Saul's daughter as reward.<sup>158</sup>

However, Saul does appoint David to command his forces (1 Sam 18:5).

---

Trebolle, "The Story of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17-18): Textual Variants and Literary Composition," *BIOSCS* 23 (1990): 16-30; and McKenzie, *King David*, 70-73.

A different approach is presented by Emmanuel Tov and Johan Lust, who argue that two independent Hebrew versions of the story were combined. See Tov, "The Composition of 1 Samuel 16-18 in the Light of the Septuagint Version," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 97-130; idem, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001; orig. 1992), 336; and Johan Lust ("The Story of David and Goliath in Hebrew and in Greek" in Barthélemy, et al., *The Story of David and Goliath*, 121-128; 155f..

Finally, the literary integrity of the MT is advocated by R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist* 161-176, and David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 434-436.

<sup>157</sup> As opposed to the version where he is brought to Saul's court to play the lyre before he defeats the Philistine (1 Sam 16: 14-23).

<sup>158</sup> In the final version of the narrative, this offer is separated from the victory over Goliath and makes no mention of the original reward. However, it is possible that the offer of Merab to David is part of an alternative account of David's early days and does connect to David's victory over Goliath.

*Saul Betroths Merab to David: 1 Sam 18:17-19*

David continues to have military victories over the Philistines, so much so that Saul becomes jealous of his successes and begins to see David as a threat to his kingship (1 Sam 18:6-16). It is at this point that Saul offers his eldest daughter (according to 1 Sam 14:49) Merab to David on the condition that David continue to be one of Saul's "stalwart men, and fight the wars of Yahweh" (*hēyēh-lî lēben-ḥayîl wēhillāḥēm milḥāmôt YHWH*). This offer is presented by the narrator as having an ulterior motive since Saul thinks to himself (1 Sam 18:17), "let not my hand strike him; let the hand of the Philistines strike him" (*'al-tēhî yādî bô ûtēhî-bô yad-pēlišṭîm*).<sup>159</sup> Saul apparently hopes that if David continues fighting in Israelite wars, he will die in the process. Saul's line of reasoning is even more apparent in the immediately following account of his marriage negotiations with David over his younger daughter Michal. However, David answers Saul (1 Sam 18:18), "Who am I and who are my kin—my father's family in Israel—that I should become son-in-law to the king?" (*mî 'ānōkî ûmî ḥayyî*<sup>160</sup> *mišpaḥat 'ābî bēyisrā'ēl kî-'ehyeh ḥātān lammelek*). David seemingly objects to the offer on the grounds that his status is too humble to become son-in-law to the king, but this is probably a diplomatic form of accepting a great honor.<sup>161</sup> The Hebrew word *ḥātān* "son-in-law" underscores

---

<sup>159</sup> McCarter, *I Samuel*, 306, suspects that 1 Sam 18:17b is redactional, "part of the process of 'correcting' the alternative account to the pattern of the primary account."

<sup>160</sup> The relatively rare word *ḥayyî* "kinfolk" is pointed in the MT as *ḥayyay* "my life." Cf. Wellhausen, *Die Text der Bücher Samuelis*, 111; Driver, *Hebrew Text*, 119; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 303; Klein, *I Samuel*, 189; BDB, 312; HALOT, 309. For a list of other proposals, see Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 483.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Exodus 3:11; Judges 6:15; 1 Samuel 9:21; 2 Samuel 7:18, 9:8; 2 Kings 8:13. For further discussion, see George W. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," *JBL* 89 (1970): 14-26. Peter R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 153; A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 219; Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 160-161; and Klein, *I Samuel*, 189 also take this view of David's answer. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 306, interprets David's response as a refusal, which has support in the following episode of David's marriage to Michal (1 Sam



that what is at stake in this marriage offer is David's relationship with the king, and this term will be used repeatedly in the episode of David's marriage to Michal.

Indeed, the text seems to understand David as betrothed to Merab because it states (1 Sam 18:19), "at the time that Merab, daughter of Saul, should have been given to David, she was instead given in marriage to Adriel the Meholathite" (*wayēhî bē'ēt tēt 'et-mērab bat-šā 'ûl lēdāwīd wēhî' nittēnâ lē 'adri'ēl hammēḥōlātî lē 'iššā*).<sup>162</sup> Though the text does not provide an explanation for Saul's sudden change of heart, it would seem that he wants to demonstrate his power relative to David's and does so by negating David's betrothal to Merab and marrying her to another. It is a strategic move to weaken David's prestige;<sup>163</sup> however, within the larger context of the David-Saul narrative complex, the decision to marry Merab to Adriel instead of David adds to Saul's characterization as capricious, as he continually vacillates in his attitude towards David (1 Sam 16-26).

Immediately following the episode of David's failed betrothal to Merab is the account of David's marriage to Saul's other daughter, Michal, which is discussed below. The two stories bear striking similarities: the bride price involves valor in warfare rather than a customary economic transaction;<sup>164</sup> Saul's ulterior motive is for David to be killed

---

18:20-29), where Saul tells his courtiers what to say in order to encourage David to accept his marriage offer (1 Sam 18:23-26).

<sup>162</sup> Located near Jabesh-Gilead, the place Saul rescues from Ammon (1 Sam 10:27b-11:15), and presumably where he would have close allies, now made closer through the marriage of his daughter to a local man. See also McCarter, *I Samuel*, 306.

<sup>163</sup> See Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 46-48.

<sup>164</sup> Usually the bride price is property or goods paid by the groom to the father of the bride, though in the Hebrew Bible there are other examples of service instead of wealth: Jacob works for Laban first seven years for Leah (unknowingly) and then seven more for Rachel (Gen 29:15-30); Caleb gives his daughter to Othniel when he attacks a town (Josh 15:16/Judg 1:12). The Hebrew term *mōhar* "bride price" is mentioned explicitly in Exodus 22:15-16, a law stipulating that a man must pay a bride-price if he has

by the Philistines without casting suspicion upon himself; David's response to the marriage offer is that he is too humble to marry the daughter of a king; and Saul gives his daughter to someone else when by rights she should belong to David. As has been suggested, these two accounts are part of different traditions regarding David's early days at Saul's court. The traditions disagree about the particular daughter to whom David is connected and whether betrothal or marriage takes place. However, both stories contain the same crucial elements: the importance for David of becoming son-in-law to the king and Saul's using the lure of marriage to his daughter as a way to eliminate David. In the alternative tradition involving Merab, Saul succeeds in weakening David's position, but in the primary tradition involving Michal, David emerges the victor.<sup>165</sup>

### **3.2.2. Michal: 1 Samuel 18:20-29, 19:11-17, 25:44; 2 Samuel 3:12-16, 6:23, 21:1-14**

David's first wife is Saul's younger daughter Michal. Michal does not appear in the lists of David's wives and sons in 2 Samuel 3 or 1 Chronicles 3, but this is most likely because the marriage does not result in children, as noted in 2 Samuel 6:23. However, stories involving Michal are scattered throughout the account of David's rise to power (1 Sam 18:20-29; 19:11-17; 25:44; 2 Sam 3:12-16; 6:16, 20-23).<sup>166</sup> In two of these narratives Michal plays an active role (1 Sam 19:11-17; 2 Sam 6:16; 20-23), but otherwise she is a passive object around whom the plot revolves. The first story in which

---

violated another man's daughter. See further, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Israel," in *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, vol. 2 (ed. Raymond Westbrook; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1007-1009; Raymond Westbrook and Bruce Wells, *Everyday Law in Biblical Israel: an Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 55-61.

<sup>165</sup> Moreover, there is obvious textual confusion between Merab and Michal in 2 Samuel 21:8. I wonder if there was actually only one daughter of Saul who is remembered by different names according to different traditions?

<sup>166</sup> Rost, *Succession to the Throne of David*, 86-87 argued for the notice of Michal's childlessness (2 Sam 6:23) as the beginning of the Succession Narrative, but I regard this entire episode, with the conquest of Jerusalem and moving the ark to David's newly-acquired capital, as the consolidation of David's power.

she appears, the brokering of her marriage to David (1 Sam 18:20-29), is chiefly one of the latter. Michal is only mentioned in the first and last clauses of the episode, and though the story revolves around her marriage, she herself is not really involved. Instead, she functions here as a pawn on the chessboard of male-male political rivalry.

*David and Michal Marry: 1 Samuel 18:20-29*

It is important to point out that despite the overall presentation of Michal as passive in 1 Sam 18:20-29, the narrative actually begins with Michal as the subject. In 1 Sam 18:20 the reader is given the information that “Michal, daughter of Saul, loved David” (*watte ’ēhab mīkal bat-šā ’ūl ’et-dāwīd*). Susan Ackerman has argued effectively that the subject of the Hebrew verb “love” (√’*hb*) is always the socially superior person, and, as the king’s daughter, Michal is David’s superior.<sup>167</sup> As Ackerman notes, this is an instance in which “class trumps gender,” and explains why Michal is the only woman in the Hebrew Bible’s narrative corpus who is said to “love” (√’*hb*) her sexual partner.<sup>168</sup>

Michal’s “love” for David in 1 Sam 18:20 is often understood to be romantic or sexual love, presumably because Michal and David marry.<sup>169</sup> This is certainly possible, and there are numerous biblical examples where love (√’*hb*) between a man and a woman

---

<sup>167</sup> Susan Ackerman, “The Personal is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love (√’*āhēb*, √’*ahābā*) in the Hebrew Bible,” *VT* (2002): 437-458.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 452. As Ackerman notes (439, n. 10), the Song of Songs, as a distinct literary genre, exhibits a different use of the term “love” (√’*hb*) than what she discusses, and in this text the female speaker often conveys her “love” (√’*hb*) for her paramour (Song 1:7; 2:5; 3:1-4; 5:8).

<sup>169</sup> As Ackerman also notes in *When Heroes Love*, 178. The sympathetic and often very poignant portrayals of Michal as a victim of unrequited love often do not give enough attention to the political aspects of the term “love,” though I agree that Michal’s position within the David narrative is not an enviable one. For examples, see Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 16-60; Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 146-155; and Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114-25.

connotes sexual attraction and/or interpersonal affection.<sup>170</sup> Yet there could be another reason Michal is said to “love” David: as part of a very specific context in 1 Samuel in which Saul’s people and even his family “love” David. The statement “Michal, daughter of Saul, loved David” is part of a significant theme within the narrative of David’s rise, particularly while he is part of Saul’s court—the transference of loyalty from Saul to David by the people of Saul’s kingdom, his court, and even his own family. This motif depicts the transference of political support from Saul to David which is described in terms of love and is focused particularly in 1 Samuel 18, where the majority of examples using the verb  $\sqrt{’hb}$  occur. The people of Saul’s kingdom are said to “love” ( $\sqrt{’hb}$ ) David (1 Sam 18:16), as are the members of Saul’s court (‘*abdē šā’ûl* “the servants of Saul”) in 1 Samuel 18:22.<sup>171</sup> Even Saul’s son Jonathan, the heir apparent, is described several times as “loving” ( $\sqrt{’hb}$ ) David (1 Sam 18:1, 3; also, 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26), discussed further in section 4.3. Thus, Michal’s “love” ( $\sqrt{’hb}$ ) for David should be seen in a similar light to her brother Jonathan’s, doubly making the point that Saul’s own family shows greater loyalty to David than to Saul.<sup>172</sup> This is not to say that personal affection should

---

<sup>170</sup> Isaac for Rebekah (Gen 24:67); Jacob for Rachel (Gen 29:18, 20, 30) and Leah (Gen 29:30); Samson for Delilah (Judg 16:4, 15) and his Timnite wife accuses him of not “loving” her (Judg 14:16); Elqanah for Hannah (1 Sam 1:5); Solomon for his foreign wives (1 Kgs 11:1-2); Rehoboam for Ma’acah (2 Chron 11:21); Ahasuerus for Esther (Est 2:17). Raising problems for interpreters, two rapists are said to “love” their victims—Shechem for Dinah (Gen 34:3) and Amnon for Tamar (2 Sam 13:1, 4). Also, see Song of Songs 1:7; 2:4-5; 3:1-4; 5:8; 8:6-8. For further discussion see Ackerman, “Personal is Political,” esp. 441-447.

<sup>171</sup> In this particular example, the words come from Saul to persuade David to agree to marry Michal and the accompanying statement that “the king is delighted with you” (*hāpēš bēkā hammelek*) is surely false, though in 1 Samuel 16:21 Saul himself is said to “love” ( $\sqrt{’hb}$ ) David very much. However, the statement would have had to ring true within the narrative context for David to buy into Saul’s deception. Moreover, 1 Samuel 18:5 shows that Saul’s court approved of David as commander of the army.

<sup>172</sup> This point is made clear in the episodes where Jonathan and Michal help David escape from Saul (1 Sam 19:11-17; 20), and Saul even complains twice about Jonathan being in league with David (1 Sam 20:30; 22:8).

be altogether excluded from our understanding of “love” ( $\sqrt{\text{'hb}}$ ) in 1 Samuel since a great political or military leader would probably also attract such sentiments. However, it seems in the context of David’s rise to prominence in Saul’s court that the “love” that the people of Israel and Saul’s own family show David is primarily political in nature.

Both Saul and David approach the marriage of Michal to David from a political standpoint, and each see it as a way to promote their own opposing interests. Each sees an advantage for himself in the potential match, which is phrased in Hebrew as “the matter was right in the eyes of” (*wayyišar haddābār bē‘ênê*) either Saul or David (1 Sam 18:20, 26). At this point in the narrative Saul sees David as a threat and wants him eliminated (1 Sam 18:8-17)<sup>173</sup> but is not yet openly hostile to him. Thus when he learns of Michal’s “love” for David, whether this constitutes romantic feelings, political loyalty, or both, he sees an opportunity in the situation to get rid of David once and for all (1 Sam 18:20).<sup>174</sup> Saul plans to give Michal to David in marriage so that “she can be a trap for him” (*těhî-lô lěmôqēš*) as he will set a bride price that will most likely cause David to die at the hands of the Philistines (*těhî-bô yad-pělišīm*) without casting bloodguilt or even suspicion upon himself (1 Sam 18:21).

To help lure David into his trap, Saul orders his courtiers to encourage David privately, telling him in 1 Samuel 18:22, “The king delights in you and all his courtiers love you; now then, make yourself son-in-law to the king! (*hinnēh hāpēš bēkā hammelek wěkol-‘ābādāyw ‘āhēbūkā wě‘attā hithattēn bammelek*). Indeed, becoming son-in-law to

---

<sup>173</sup> If the first episode of Saul throwing a spear at David in 1 Samuel 18:10-11 is part of a later addition, Saul’s hostility toward David is still less apparent to the other characters. This would fit both the Merab and Michal marriage offers, in which Saul secretly wants to place David in mortal peril. By 1 Samuel 19, however, Saul is overtly attempting to have David killed. See McCarter, *I Samuel*, 305-306.

<sup>174</sup> Saul only sees Michal’s love for David as “right” ( $\sqrt{\text{yšr}}$ ) because he wants to manipulate the situation to eliminate David.

the king is precisely what is at stake in this marriage. The denominative verb “become a son-in-law” (*√hṭn*) occurs five times in 1 Samuel 18:21-27, underscoring that marriage is a way of cementing a socio-political alliance between men via marriage with a female relative, which creates kinship between the husband and the woman’s family. David’s initial reaction is similar to his response to Saul’s offer of marriage with Merab (1 Sam 18:18). He replies to Saul’s courtiers in 1 Samuel 18:23, “Do you think it a trifling matter to become son-in-law to the king? I am only a poor man and of little consequence” (*hanqalâ bē’ênêkem hiṭhattēn bammelek wē’ānōkî ’iš-rāš wēniqlēh*). Saul must have guessed this would be David’s response because he uses it to lay his trap. He has his courtiers inform David that the king does not want the typical bride price involving a transfer of wealth from the bridegroom to the father-in-law. Instead, Saul sets his bride price for Michal at one hundred Philistine foreskins, requiring acts of valor rather than an economic transaction.<sup>175</sup> Saul’s bride price is situated against the Israelites’ hostile relationship with the Philistines, who are a constant problem for Saul during his reign and the cause of his eventual demise. Though Saul would receive no economic gain from this transaction with David, as king, he would gain political advantage from the death of a hundred Philistines, and such a benefit makes his marriage offer seem credible. However, as 1 Samuel 18:25 makes clear, Saul’s intention behind the unusual bride price is “to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines” (*lēhappîl ’et-dāwid bēyad-pēlišîm*), though he would also presumably be pleased to have a few Philistines out of the way. Thus Saul appears to overlook David’s poverty in exchange

---

<sup>175</sup> In Genesis 34:12, Shechem, who has violated Jacob’s daughter Dinah, declares that he will fulfill any bride-price Jacob requests. Interestingly, in this example circumcision—and deceit—are also involved.

for valor but secretly intends for David to be killed during his attempt to secure Michal's bride price, pitting his internal enemy against his external threat.

David acquiesces to Saul's proposition, recognizing the advantage of becoming Saul's son-in-law (1 Sam 18:26). With the help of his fighting men, he slays the Philistines and brings the required foreskins to Saul, where they are counted out before the king. A bride price of Philistine foreskins is symbolically appropriate since the story is really about competition between David and Saul via marriage negotiation. Saul's unusual bride price is in some sense a contest of masculinity for David to secure sexual rights to his daughter. Circumcision is a marker of ethnic identity in ancient Israel, but since the identification is made upon male genitalia, it marks gender as well. In a sense, then, David not only kills the appropriate number of Philistines, he also to some extent unmans them. That the mark of circumcision is made on the male sexual organ also has bearing on Saul's bride price. Saul could have just as easily asked for a hundred Philistine heads, or any other appendages.<sup>176</sup> By asking for Philistine foreskins, Saul is symbolically challenging David to prove his manhood, specifically that he is man enough to bed a daughter of the king. The hero David, of course, "measures up" to Saul's test of his valor, and in the Septuagint version, he exceeds the bride price by doubling the number of foreskins, clearly demonstrating that David is the superior man over Saul. Thus Saul's plan is thwarted, and instead of bringing about David's demise, Saul makes David one of his kinsmen and provides him with a way of legitimizing his rule over

---

<sup>176</sup> In 2 Kings 10:8, after usurping the throne, Jehu piles up the heads of any possible threats to his kingship.

Israel.<sup>177</sup> In this story, Saul honors the marriage agreement and gives Michal to David to be his wife (1 Sam 18:27).

Michal's love for David is mentioned once more at the conclusion of the story (1 Sam 18:28-29): "When Saul realized that Yahweh was with David and that Michal, the daughter of Saul, loved him, Saul grew still more afraid of David; and Saul was David's enemy ever after" (*wayyarē' šā'ûl wayyēda' kî YHWH 'im-dāwid ûmîkal bat-šā'ûl 'āhēbathû wayyo 'sep šā'ûl lēro' mippēnē dāwid 'ôd wayēhî šā'ûl 'ōyēb 'et-dāwid kol-hayyāmîm*).<sup>178</sup> Royal princesses were supposed to be assets to their fathers via marriage negotiations, but in this story Saul recognizes that Michal's "love," for David means that she will support her husband over and against her father. Thus Saul's daughter has now become a political liability instead of an asset to her father, the king. Indeed, in the next episode in which Michal appears (1 Sam 19:11-17), Saul's fears about Michal's loyalty are realized.

#### *Michal Helps David Escape: 1 Sam 19:11-17*

Michal plays a more active role in 1 Samuel 19:11-17 where she helps David escape Saul, who, now openly hostile to David, plans to have David put to death. Michal is the informant and the one with an escape plan; David is entirely passive in the story.

---

<sup>177</sup> As stated succinctly by McCarter, "a marriage to Michal gives David a claim to royal house of Israel, which he will use to justify his succession" (*1 Samuel*, 318). Morgenstern ("David and Jonathan," *JBL* 78 [1959]: 322-325) even argues that at this point in Israel's history the king's son-in-law, rather than the king's son, was heir to the throne. Marriage to Michal certainly helps legitimize David's—a Judahite's—rule over Israel by giving him a definite connection to Saul's family. However, at various points the text shows that David's claim to kingship over Israel is shaky, such as in Shimei's cursing of David (2 Sam 16:5-14), factional differences between Israel and Judah (2 Sam 19: 10-15; 42-44), and Sheba's revolt (2 Sam 20).

<sup>178</sup> The Septuagint (LXX<sup>B</sup>) translation reads "all Israel" (reflecting *kl yśr'l*) in place of the MT's "Michal, daughter of Saul." However, 1 Samuel 18:16 reads "all Israel and Judah loved David" (*kol yiśrā'el wiyhûdā 'ōhēb 'et-dāwīd*), very similar language. This could be a simple mistake or a reflection of variant traditions. I have chosen to follow the MT.



He does exactly what Michal says but says nothing himself. In this episode, Michal demonstrates that her allegiance to her husband is stronger than to her father, as the statement in 1 Samuel 18:20 that she “loved” David indicates. Indeed, Michal is identified as David’s “wife” (*’ištô* in 1 Sam 19:11) in this episode, not as “Saul’s daughter” (*bat-šā’ûl*), her more common epithet (1 Sam 18:20, 27-28; 25:44; 2 Sam 3:13; 6:16, 20, 23).<sup>179</sup> This is appropriate for 1 Samuel 19:11-17 since Michal acts in her capacity as David’s wife, giving her support to her husband over her father. Elsewhere her identity as “Saul’s daughter” is more important so she is referenced by her patronymic. Though sex is not a component of this narrative, David and Michal are described as living together since they appear to dwell in a separate location from Saul (1 Sam 19:11; 14-16) and also share a bedroom (1 Sam 19:13; 16).<sup>180</sup> The action of the narrative focuses on their marital bed, but David is not actually in it.

Michal warns David to flee and helps him escape through a window (1 Sam 19:11-12). To delay Saul’s pursuit of David, Michal deceives Saul’s guards into thinking David is ill. She uses a household idol (*teraphim*) as a dummy for a sick David, placing it in bed and tops it with a tangle of goats’ hair for a realistic effect (1 Sam 19:13).<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> Michal is also called “wife of David” by the narrator in 1 Samuel 25:44, the notice that Saul has given her in marriage to Palti. David also refers to Michal as “my wife” in his suit to Ishbaal that Michal be returned to him (2 Sam 3:13), which, rhetorically, helps make his case. Importantly, Michal is identified by patronymic in 2 Samuel 6:20-23 where she acts as representative of Saul’s house in critique of her husband the king. See further discussion in section 5.3.

<sup>180</sup> McCarter sees this episode, which he argues should follow 1 Sam 18:27, as David and Michal’s wedding night (*I Samuel*, 325).

<sup>181</sup> Michal’s actions in this episode are reminiscent of several other biblical tales involving female characters and deception. Michal lowering David through a window is evocative of Rahab helping the Israelite spies in Joshua 2:15. Teraphim are also important in Genesis 31, where Rachel deceives her father after stealing his teraphim—when he searches their belongings, she is able to hide them by putting them in a saddle bag, sitting on it, and then claiming she cannot rise because she is menstruating. The detail of Michal’s using goat hair possibly alludes to Rebekah’s use goats’ hair to make Jacob’s arms seem like Esau’s and so deceive Isaac in Genesis 27. There might also be a connection between Michal’s ruse of

Michal's trick seems to work on Saul's messengers, but Saul is not satisfied. He orders his officers to see for themselves if David is ill and further demands that David be brought to him in bed to be executed (1 Sam 19:15). Upon inspection, Saul's messengers see that they have been deceived and David has fled. At the conclusion of the episode, Saul questions his daughter for her role in helping David escape, exclaiming in 1 Samuel 19:17, "why have you betrayed me like this? You have let my enemy go, and he has escaped!" (*lāmmâ kākâ rimmîtinî wattēšallēhî 'et- 'ōyēbî wayyimmāllēt*). Here Saul seems to expect that, despite Michal's marriage and her "love" for David, he should still demand some loyalty from his daughter. Michal tells Saul that David threatened her, saying "Help me get away or else I'll kill you!" (*šallēhinî lāmâ 'āmîtek*). There is no mention of a threat elsewhere in the episode, and since it is Michal who informs David of danger, formulates the escape plan, and carries out the ruse, her statement is probably best understood as a lie. In fact, the person who is a danger to Michal at this point is her father Saul, whom the narrative depicts as impulsively violent (1 Sam 18:10-11; 19:9-10; 20:33). Michal has allied herself with David against Saul, but now that David has fled, she evokes her father's sympathy by presenting herself as helpless and in danger, effectively playing both sides.

#### *Michal and Jonathan*

Similar to her brother Jonathan, who is discussed in chapter 4, Michal shows greater loyalty to David than to her father the king. As characters, Michal and Jonathan function in a similar manner within the narrative account of David's rise. Both Michal and Jonathan are said to "love" David, as discussed above, and furthermore, both siblings

---

illness to Amnon's deception of Tamar using feigned illness in 2 Samuel 13:1-22. I do not necessarily wish to argue for direct dependence among these stories but simply to point out the intertextuality of particularly vivid narrative details in several biblical texts.

lie to their father Saul about David (1 Sam 19:17; 20:28-29), and both help David escape death at Saul's hand (1 Sam 19:11-16; 20). Moreover, the material about Michal and Jonathan exhibits a similar fragmentation within the larger narrative of David's rise to power. Though both Jonathan and Michal primarily figure in the period in which David is at Saul's court, both continue to make appearances after this point (1 Sam 23:16-18; 25:44; 2 Sam 1; 3:13-16; 6:16, 20-23). Through stories involving Jonathan and Michal, the David Narrative shows that even Saul's own children—those who should presumably be most loyal to him—transfer their allegiance to David, a theme which underscores David's claim to be the rightful ruler over Israel.

The similarities and differences in the roles played by Jonathan and Michal in relation to David, as well as the ultimate outcomes for both of these children of Saul, have been the subject of discussion by various scholars. Adele Berlin has argued that Michal is more masculine than her brother Jonathan, pointing out that Michal is not described as “beautiful,” saves David by physical means, and does not bear children.<sup>182</sup> While Berlin raises a number of good observations, I agree with the critique raised by J. Cheryl Exum who sees Berlin's interpretation as reinforcing gender stereotypes.<sup>183</sup> Exum argues instead that “kingship over Israel is mediated to David through Jonathan, not Michal; that is, through friendship with the king's son, and not the more common means, marriage to the king's daughter.”<sup>184</sup> From a somewhat different perspective, Susan Ackerman suggests that within the Samuel tradition David's relationship with Jonathan

---

<sup>182</sup> Berlin, “Characterization in Biblical Narrative,” 70-72.

<sup>183</sup> Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 52.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

replaces or supersedes his relationship with Michal, which supports her view of the relationship between David and Jonathan as potentially homoerotic.<sup>185</sup> Building on these arguments, I view the material about Michal and Jonathan as part of separate traditions, both of which focus on Saul's kingdom and his family transferring their support to David. Together, the material about Michal and Jonathan provides a double-justification for David from Saul's immediate descendants. Thus, to borrow from Exum's statement, I would say that kingship over Israel is mediated to David through *both* Jonathan *and* Michal.

Regarding Ackerman's view of Jonathan as a replacement for Michal, it seems to me that the Jonathan material is later than the Michal material,<sup>186</sup> so in a sense, I agree. At some point perhaps marriage to the king's daughter was not enough to justify David's claim to Israel's throne, perhaps because the marriage did not result in children or due to Michal's more negative portrayal later in the narrative. Nevertheless, friendship between men who should be rivals requires more explanation than a marriage alliance, which is perhaps why Jonathan has a somewhat more significant role than Michal within the narrative.<sup>187</sup>

---

<sup>185</sup> Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 177-181; 184-187. As I discuss in chapter 4, I do not understand the depiction of the relationship between David and Jonathan in Samuel as homoerotic.

<sup>186</sup> This is indicated by the emphasis on "covenant" throughout the Jonathan episodes, as well as the thoroughly positive portrayal of Jonathan. The Michal episodes when David is at Saul's court appear to stem from traditional folk narrative material, though this presentation of Michal is divergent from her characterization later in the David Narrative (2 Sam 6:16; 20-23), suggesting different compositional stages.

<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, the David narrative was potentially written within a cultural milieu of heroic "friendship narratives" such as the Mesopotamian *Gilgamesh Epic* and the Homeric *Iliad*. For comparisons of these ancient texts, see Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, and David M. Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," pp. 75-87 in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

*Michal Restored to David: 1 Sam 25:44; 2 Sam 3:12-16*

After David flees Saul's court, Saul gives Michal in marriage to a man named Palti. However, this information is only noted after the accounts of David's marriages to Ahinoam and Abigail while he is a fugitive from Saul in Judah (1 Sam 25:44): "Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti,<sup>188</sup> son of Laish, from Gallim" (*wēšā'ûl nātan 'et-mīkal bittô 'ēšet dāwid lēpalṭi ben-layīš 'āšer miggallîm*).<sup>189</sup> Gallim, also mentioned in Isaiah 10:30, seems to have been located north of Jerusalem.<sup>190</sup> If this location is correct, we can speculate that Palti and his father Laish were relatively powerful Israelites with land holdings near the southern border of Saul's kingdom and marriage to the king's daughter ensures the loyalty of this border area. Presumably Saul also remarries Michal to lessen any claim David might have to Israel's throne. In so doing, Saul emphasizes his superior social position as king while David is relatively powerless, a man on the run. Also, Saul symbolically demonstrates his power over David's masculinity. As a result of marriage, David should have had exclusive sexual

---

<sup>188</sup> This is the short form of his name. His full name, Paltiel, "God is my savior," is given in 2 Samuel 3:16.

<sup>189</sup> Commentators struggled for centuries to explain Saul's action in giving Michal to Palti, which deliberately flies in the face of biblical laws on marriage, but Zafira Ben-Barak ("The Legal Background to the Restoration of Michal to David," *VT Supp.* 5 (1979): 15-29) has pointed out several Mesopotamian laws that if a man was captured by an enemy and later returned, his wife had to be restored to him even if she had married another man in his absence. He cites the law codes of Ešnunna (§29) and Hammurabi (§135), as well as the Middle Assyrian Laws (§45), and he argues that David meets the requirements of these laws as a fugitive from Saul forcibly kept away from his wife for a long period of time. However, all three law codes specify that the absent husband was captured by an enemy. The protasis of the law code of Ešnunna reads: "If a man should be captured or abducted during a raiding expedition or while on patrol" (*šumma awīlum ina ḥarrān šeḥṭim u sakpim it[tašlal]*); Hammurabi: "If a man should be captured" (*šumma awīlum iššalilma*); and MAL: "If a woman is given in marriage and the enemy then takes her husband prisoner ([šumm]a sinniltu tadnat [u] mussa nakru ilteque emuša). Ben-Barak argues that David is in a similar situation of forced exile with Saul, but I find this part of his argument untenable, especially since David is king at the point when he makes his demand of Ishbaal and the two are enemies.

<sup>190</sup> See McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 400.

access to Michal, but by giving her to another man, Saul displays that he still controls sexual access to his daughter.

Shortly after Saul's death, David is anointed king over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam 2:1-4). At this point in the David narrative, Saul's son Ishba'al has succeeded him, though he rules over a reduced territory (2 Sam 2:8-10),<sup>191</sup> and it seems that Abner, who is the army commander first under Saul and now Ishba'al, is the *de facto* ruler over Israel (2 Sam 3:6). There is a political stalemate between Israel and Judah, and the two polities are constantly at war (2 Sam 3:2). One way in which David begins to gain the upper hand in this contest for power is via solidifying his marriage to Michal. David demands that Michal be restored to him as a wife (2 Sam 3:12-16), which demonstrates what a valuable commodity a royal marriage to Michal, as Saul's daughter, represents.

In 2 Samuel 3:7 Ishba'al accuses his general Abner of having illicit sexual relations with Saul's concubine Rizpah, an episode that is discussed further in section 5.2. Furious at the accusation, Abner defects to David's side (2 Sam 3:8-10) and sends word to David that he would like to make an alliance with him (2 Sam 3:12). However, David only agrees to meet with Abner if he brings Michal with him (2 Sam 3:13), making the most of his now advantageous position.<sup>192</sup> Though an alliance with Abner is already beneficial to David, marriage with Michal provides him greater legitimacy for ruling over Israel, his political aim.

---

<sup>191</sup> Saul's territory has been reduced after his defeat by the Philistines and Ishbaal has had to move the Israelite capital to the Transjordan.

<sup>192</sup> McCarter (*II Samuel*, 114) sees this as a show of good faith and compares David's request to the similar language of Joseph's statement to his brothers in Genesis 43:3, 5 that they will not see his face (*lō' tir'û pānāy*) unless they bring his youngest brother Benjamin with them.

Surprisingly, in the very next verse (2 Sam 3:14), David also sends messengers to Ishba‘al demanding that Michal be restored to him as his wife and referencing the distinctive bride price: “Give *me* my wife Michal, whom I betrothed for a hundred Philistine foreskins!” (*těná ’et-’išťi ’et-mikal ’ăšer ’ēraštî lî bēmē’â ’ārēlôt pēlišťim*). Ishba‘al agrees to David’s request and orders that Michal be taken from her current husband and given to David. This response by Ishba‘al seems rather odd, especially in the midst of heavy competition between Ishba‘al and David, since marrying Michal to David will strengthen David’s justification for ruling over Israel. However, it makes sense if 2 Samuel 3:14-15 was added by a later editor to give further legitimacy for David’s marriage to Michal.<sup>193</sup> As the text now stands, the two main presentations of Ishba‘al’s character involve control over sexual access to particular women. David’s competitor appears relatively weak in both episodes. After Abner’s withdrawal of political support, as well as military leadership, Ishba‘al is “afraid” (*miyyir’ātô*) to respond to him (2 Sam 3:11). Furthermore, he immediately acquiesces to David’s demand to restore Michal even though she is married and it is not in Ishba‘al’s best political interest. David, however, benefits politically from both encounters, gaining the support of Abner and marriage to Michal.

The narrative does not describe the reuniting of Michal and David or even note that Michal once again becomes David’s wife. Instead, the text presents the separation of Michal from her second husband (2 Sam 3:15-16): “So Ishba‘al sent word and had her

---

<sup>193</sup> It seems odd that David would make this demand of Ishbaal when he is negotiating secretly with Abner. Moreover, it is Abner who brings Michal to David as admittance to a treaty negotiation, but it seems unlikely that Ishbaal would have Abner carry out his orders since he has turned traitor for David. I agree with Grønbeck (*Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids*, 237-238), who argues that this verse was added to the account of Abner’s defection to David in order to make David’s marriage with Michal appear to be properly sanctified. As the text stands now, though, David appears to be hedging his bets between Abner and Ishbaal.

[Michal] taken from her husband, Paltiel, son of Laish, but her husband went with her, weeping as he went, following her as far as Bahurim, where Abner said to him, ‘Go, turn back!’ So he returned” (*wayyišlah ’iš-bā’al wayyiqqāḥehā mē’īm ’išā*<sup>194</sup> *mē’īm palṭī’ēl ben-lāyiš wayyēlek ’ittāh ’išāh hālōk ūbākōh ’aḥrēhā ’ad-bahūrīm wayyomer ’ēlāyw ’abnēr lēk šūb wayyāšōb*). It is striking that the narrative chooses to focus on the parting of Michal from her husband, and, with others, I find it very tempting to read Paltiel’s weeping as a touching emotional detail showing the human side of the politics of sexuality.<sup>195</sup> While this is certainly possible, I doubt that this was the intention of the writer of this passage. Paltiel’s tears are ineffective—Abner does not waver, perhaps in order to demonstrate his power throughout Israel as he defects to Judah.

How do we account for the fact that David’s remarriage to Michal is not specifically mentioned? Michal seems to have the status of a wife in 2 Samuel 6, despite the fact that the text never actually states that David resumes the marriage. This glaring omission could be explained simply as a result of the account of the restoration of Michal to David being tied into the larger narrative of Abner’s defection and murder—it was either lost or not seen as important as the other material. However, the exclusion also builds suspense and prepares the reader for Michal’s confrontation of David in 2 Samuel 6:16, 20-23. By focusing on Paltiel’s tears at Michal’s parting and not including any description of the reunion between Michal and David, the narrative subtly insinuates that, though in many ways advantageous, the restoration of Michal to David is also

---

<sup>194</sup> Reading suffix with LXX, Vulg., Syr., Targ. Also omitting second *mē’īm* with LXX<sup>L</sup> and two Hebrew mss.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 55; Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise*, 153; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 187-188; McKenzie, *King David*, 118.



problematic. The omission of Michal and David's reunion highlights the "veritable emotional explosion"<sup>196</sup> which takes place between the king and the daughter of Saul in 2 Samuel 6:20-22.

As David's power increases, so do the relative importance of his wives, and now that he is king of Hebron (2 Sam 2:1-4), he manages to arrange his marriage to Saul's daughter Michal in spite of the fact that she is married to another. This marriage will give David a claim for kingship over Israel, a position he is actively pursuing while at war with Ishba'al. Very shortly after Michal's restoration to David in 2 Sam 3, Ishba'al is murdered and David does indeed become king over Israel as well as Judah (2 Sam 4:5-5:3). It is no coincidence that, within the narrative, David resumes his marriage to Michal before he assumes the Israelite throne. Moreover, as Saul's clan is virtually decimated during the early years of David's reign, marriage to Saul's daughter protects David from the accusation of killing Saulides, similar to his preservation of Jonathan's son Meribba'al (2 Sam 9; 21:1).

*Michal's Childlessness: 2 Sam 6:23*

After Michal is restored to David, 2 Sam 6:16; 20-23 recounts a dispute between husband and wife that combines issues of sex, politics, and religion (discussed in more detail in section 5.3). Michal sarcastically critiques David's actions during the cultic procession accompanying the Ark of Yahweh into Jerusalem, insinuating that his behavior is sexually inappropriate. David, however, defends his actions as reflecting his Yahwistic piety, and further retorts that Yahweh has chosen him as king instead of the House of Saul. The episode concludes with a note that Michal was childless (2 Sam

---

<sup>196</sup> Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 23.

6:23): “Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no children until the day of her death” (*ûlēmīkal bat-šā’ûl lô’-hāyâ lāh yāled ‘ad yôm môtāh*).

From a theological perspective, the book of Samuel presents Yahweh as rejecting Saul and his line, so David, Yahweh’s chosen one, cannot continue it. Thus, the writers of the David Narrative want to make clear that David does not continue Saul’s blood line. Perhaps the text wants us to assume that David and Michal did not have a child because Yahweh did not want to continue Saul’s line,<sup>197</sup> but this is never stated specifically.

However, a potential reason for Michal’s childlessness could have been because David stopped marital relations.<sup>198</sup> The text does not say that Michal is barren, only that she is childless at the time of her death. As I have discussed, marriage to Michal significantly benefits David as she provides David with a legitimate, if not direct, claim to Saulide rule. However, as important as marriage to Michal is to David’s power politics, having children with Michal would complicate matters for David since this would continue Saul’s blood-line. A son would be the obvious choice to succeed David’s throne as heir to both royal houses, and Saul would be the dynastic founder, not David. Under the apologetic veneer of the David narrative, which presents David as loyal to Saul and innocent of Saul’s “paranoid” suspicions about him, David appears to be Saul’s rival and enemy. Moreover, after Saul’s death, David seems fairly intent on wiping out Saul’s descendants (though always exonerated from responsibility for these deaths), so presumably he would not want to create more Saulides. Thus, it would make sense politically for David’s marriage to Michal to be a marriage in name only.

---

<sup>197</sup> Yahweh controls wombs in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson’s mother, Hannah).

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Tomoo Ishida, *Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, 78; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 187-188.

*The Execution of Seven Saulides: 2 Sam 21:1-14*

The suggestive evidence of David's desire to ensure Michal's childlessness is propounded by the episode of the execution of seven descendants of Saul in 2 Samuel 21:1-14. This account is part of an "appendix" to the David Narrative that consists of several self-contained stories (2 Sam 21-24), and this episode takes place after David is king over Israel.<sup>199</sup> Famine breaks out, and when David inquires of Yahweh as to the cause, Yahweh responds that the famine is due to Saul having executed some Gibeonites (2 Sam 21:1) during his reign, though this event is not recorded elsewhere in the Bible. David asks what he can do for the Gibeonites, and they answer that they want to be allowed to put seven male descendants of Saul to death (2 Sam 21:2-6). David agrees, and he hands over two sons that Saul's concubine Rizpah bore to him and "the five sons that Michal, daughter of Saul bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite" (*ḥēmēšet bēnē mērab bat-šā'ūl 'āšer yālēdā lē'adri'el ben-barzillay hammēḥōlātī*).

There is obvious textual confusion in the MT as it stands since it is Merab whom Saul marries to Adriel the Meholathite in 1 Samuel 18:19. Besides David, Michal is married to a man named Paltiel, or Palti, of Gallim (1 Sam 25:44; 2 Sam 3:12-16). Most Hebrew manuscripts read "Michal" here, but two Hebrew manuscripts, along with many Septuagint manuscripts, the Syriac Peshittā, and the Aramaic Targum translations, have "Merab." In light of Merab's marriage to Adriel the Meholathite in 1 Samuel 18:19, as well as the note of Michal's childlessness in 2 Samuel 6:23, many scholars suggest that Michal is a mistake for Merab. However, some argue instead that Michal should be

---

<sup>199</sup> But see the view of Graeme Auld who argues that these chapters constituted the conclusion of an earlier and shorter story of David before the insertion of 2 Samuel 9-20 ("A Factored Response to an Enigma" in *For and Against David: Story and History in the Books of Samuel* [eds. A. Graeme Auld and Erik Eynikel; Leuven: Peeters, 2010], 359-368).

retained here and that Adriel should be understood as Paltiel, the man to whom Michal is married after David flees Saul's court. For example, Tomoo Ishida argues that the emendation of Michal to Merab is a result of moral considerations for David. He states that if Michal indeed had sons from her other marriage, then "it must have been very urgent for David to get rid of them, since they had a double claim to the kingship of Israel, as Saul's grandsons and as the stepsons of David...we may assume that Michal's sons had more than one prospects of becoming the nucleus to restore Saul's monarchy."<sup>200</sup> Since an understanding of this text involves emending one of the personal names over the other, any reading is somewhat arbitrary. However, I am inclined to understand the passage as referring to Michal for the reasons given by Ishida above, and in addition to this, I would add that Rizpah and Michal also appear together in Abner's defection to David recounted in 2 Samuel 3, perhaps suggesting a literary association of two women closely connected to Saul.

This mass execution has divine sanction but also nearly wipes out Saul's male descendants, with the exception of Jonathan's son, the lame Meribba'al, whom David spares because of his covenant with Jonathan.<sup>201</sup> The death of these men effectively removes any Saulide competition David might have for the throne of Israel. If Michal is the correct reading of this passage, Paltiel's tears can be understood in a new light, foreshadowing the horror that befalls his family at the behest of David.

---

<sup>200</sup> Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 78. See also J. J. Glück, "Merab or Michal" *ZAW* 77 (1965): 72-81; Stoebe, *Das erste Buch Samuelis*, 451, who suggests that Adriel is the Aramaic version of the name Paltiel, meaning "God is my savior," concluding that these divergent names are the same person. Cf. Ben-Barak, "Legal Background to the Restoration of Michal," 27.

<sup>201</sup> Ishida, *ibid.*, points out that even Meribbaal potentially hopes of being made king, indicated from Ziba's report during Absalom's rebellion, so these other sons and grandsons of Saul would have been an even bigger threat.

Though fragmented,<sup>202</sup> the amount of Michal material in the David narrative attests to the pivotal importance of an alliance with the house of Saul for David's justification in ruling Israel. Marriage to Michal makes David part of Saul's family and—officially, at least—Saul's ally, and this kinship gives David a claim to the throne of Israel even though he is a Judahite. However, since David and Saul are actually enemies, producing children with Michal would be politically problematic for David. Thus, as the daughter of a king and the wife of a king, the sexuality of Michal represents both an asset and a liability for David's power politics.

### **3.3. *Women of Judah***

After David has fled Saul's court, he roams the Judean wilderness with Saul in hot pursuit. While on the move, David manages to become the leader of a band of four hundred disenfranchised men (1 Sam 22:2): "to him gathered every man in difficulties, every man sought by a creditor, and every man with a bitter spirit, and he became their commander (*wayyitqabbēšû 'ēlāyw kol- 'îš māšôq wēkol- 'îš 'āšer-lô nōše' wēkol- 'îš mar-nepeš wayēhî 'ālêhem lēšār*). David, who is himself unjustly forced into a fugitive existence by Saul, becomes the champion of the deprived and discontented.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, David quickly manages to gain some power in the Negev of Judah, even if it is only over men on the outskirts of civil society. During this section of the narrative, David accrues further power in Judah and builds personal loyalties that will benefit him throughout his future reign. Fittingly, at this time David also marries two Judahite women, Ahinoam

---

<sup>202</sup> See Exum, *Fragmented Women*, esp. 42-43.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. discussion by McCarter, *I Samuel*, 357.

and Abigail, who will help cement his ties to the region over which he will first be chosen king.

### **3.3.1. Abigail: 1 Samuel 25**

David marries Abigail after the death of her husband, a wealthy and powerful Judahite rancher. 1 Samuel 25 tells the story of how David came to be married to this wealthy widow and recounts Abigail's intercession for her husband, who has insulted David.<sup>204</sup> Abigail is called the "wife of Nabal of Carmel" (*'ēšet nābāl hakkarmēlî*) in the list of David's sons found in 2 Samuel 3:2-5<sup>205</sup> and when mentioned in two narratives which take place after her marriage to David (1 Sam 30:5; 2 Sam 2:2). Presumably in this phrase "wife" is meant to be understood as "widow," but the technical term for widow, *'almānā*, is never used in reference to Abigail. Since Abigail continues to be connected to Nabal after his death, it seems that her first marriage remains significant in regards to her second husband, David.<sup>206</sup>

The story of Abigail and David begins by introducing Abigail's husband, Nabal, a "very powerful" (*'iš gādōl mē'ōd*) Calebite from Maon who is shearing his three thousand sheep in Carmel (1 Sam 25:2). Both Maon and Carmel are cities south of Hebron in Judah, an area controlled by the Calebites (Josh 14:13-15; Jdg 1:10-20).

Hebron is a significant location for David since this is where he is first elected king and is

---

<sup>204</sup> There is only one other mention of an Abigail, a woman identified as David's sister in 2 Samuel 17:25 and 1 Chronicles 2:17. Jon Levenson and Baruch Halpern ("The Political Import of David's Marriages," 511-513; 516) speculate that this is the same person and that David was married to his sister, but the incestuous union was concealed by later editors. See also the discussion by McKenzie, *King David*, 54-55. However, given the confusion surrounding women's names in Samuel, I regard the two Abigail's as separate individuals.

<sup>205</sup> With MT and Syr. LXX, OL, and 4 Q Sam reflect "Abigail of Carmel," without Nabal's name, cf. 1 Chr 3:1.

<sup>206</sup> Or perhaps the story of Nabal was so famous that it stuck with her?

also his first capital city. The narrative next describes Nabal and his wife Abigail in opposing terms (1 Sam 25:3): Abigail is “intelligent and beautiful” (*tōbat-šekel wiypat tō’ar*),<sup>207</sup> but Nabal is “abrasive and contemptible” (*qāšeh wēra‘ ma ‘ālālīm*). In fact, his very name, *nābāl*, means “fool,” as Abigail makes clear in 1 Samuel 25:25, discussed below.<sup>208</sup> However, as Jon Levenson has pointed out, the type of “fool” Nabal represents is not “a harmless simpleton, but rather a vicious, materialistic, and egocentric misfit,”<sup>209</sup> so perhaps a better modern translation would be “churl.”<sup>210</sup> As has been recognized, Abigail and her husband Nabal in 1 Samuel 25 are both “type” characters; that is, both represent “exaggerated stereotypes.”<sup>211</sup> From a historical perspective, Abigail’s position

---

<sup>207</sup> Abigail has been interpreted as a representation the “woman of valor” (*’ēšet ḥayil*) described in Proverbs 31:10-31 while her husband is the proverbial fool. While in many ways persuasive, this view falters in several areas. Overall, Proverbs 31 describes the *’ēšet ḥayil* as efficiently managing her family’s household economy and so earning the admiration of her family and community. 1 Samuel 25, however, does not necessarily give a comparable description of Abigail, though to be sure, Abigail does organize provisions to bring to David very quickly. Moreover, Proverbs 31 downplays beauty (31:30) where 1 Samuel 25:3 describes Abigail as both intelligent and beautiful. Furthermore, if Abigail represents the *’ēšet ḥayil*, it is surprising that she would be presented as disrespectful towards her husband (1 Sam 25:25-26). Even though she saves her family, calling her husband a “good-for-nothing” (*’iš-habbēliyya ‘al*) and a “churl” (*nābāl*) do not seem to fit Proverbs 31:12, which states that the *’ēšet ḥayil* “does good to him [her husband], never bad, all the days of her life” (*gēmaltēhū tōb wēlo ‘-rā’ kōl yēmē ḥayyēhā*). Abigail has surely saved her household, but Nabal hardly “praises” Abigail’s actions (cf. Prov 31:28) since “his heart turn[s] to stone” when she tells him the news (1 Sam 25:37), nor does he earn a good reputation because of Abigail (cf. Prov 38:23). Since much of the didactic portion of Abigail’s speech seems to come from a later additions to the story, it seems that the image of Abigail as the proverbial *’ēšet ḥayil* overlays the original story in which Abigail’s role is chiefly diplomatic.

<sup>208</sup> Levenson (“1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” *CBQ* 40 [1978]: 13-14) argues that Nabal’s name is a character-assassination: no parent would name their child “fool,” so whatever Abigail’s husband might have been named historically, it has been changed to fit the “teaching” of this story.

<sup>209</sup> Levenson, “1 Samuel 25,” 13.

<sup>210</sup> Berlin also gives this translation, “Characterization in Biblical Narrative,” 77.

<sup>211</sup> Berlin, *ibid.*, 76-77. Her discussion of Abigail depends in large part on Levenson’s treatment of 1 Samuel 25, as does my own (“1 Sam 25 as Literature and as History,” *CBQ* 40 [1978]: 11-28).

as the widow of a wealthy, powerful Calebite benefits David; however, the story of their marriage is presented as a moralistic tale in the David Narrative.<sup>212</sup>

When David hears that Nabal is shearing his sheep, he sends ten of his men to ask Nabal to give David and his band a share in the feast in exchange for the (unsolicited) protection they have provided for Nabal's men and sheep (1 Sam 25:4-8), as David and his men "did not harm them and nothing of theirs was missing all the time they were in Carmel" (*lō' heklamnûm wēlō'-nipqad lāhem mē'ûmâ kol-yēmē hēyôtām bakkarmel*). Although he is essentially running a protection racket,<sup>213</sup> David's request to Nabal is culturally appropriate in its polite diplomacy. In 1 Samuel 25:6 David instructs his men to greet Nabal with an expression of good wishes: "peace be to you, peace be to your house, and peace be to all you have" (*'attâ šālôm ûbêtēkâ šālôm wēkōl 'ăšer-lēkâ šālôm*).<sup>214</sup> Also, David refers to himself as Nabal's "son" (*binkā*), which is conventional diplomatic language to a superior diplomatic partner,<sup>215</sup> and in his message, he asks

---

<sup>212</sup> As eloquently discussed by Levenson, "1 Sam 25."

<sup>213</sup> Cf. McKenzie, *King David*, 97.

<sup>214</sup> The salutations of the international diplomatic correspondence among the Amarna Letters likewise include well wishes for the addressee. According to William L. Moran, ed. (*The Amarna Letters* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992], xxiii), this part of the salutation is never omitted. An example of the general format can be found in *EA* 1 (and elsewhere): "For you may all go well. For your household, for your wives, for your sons, for your magnates, your horses, your chariots, for your countries, may all go well" (*ana maḥrika lū šulmu ana bītka ana aššātika ana mārīka ana<sup>LU</sup> rabūtika sisīka<sup>GIS</sup> narkabātika ana libbi mātātika dannīš lū šulmu*), but see also the very similar examples in *EA* 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24 (Hurrian), 26, 27, 28, 29, 31 (Hittite), 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 45, 49. Condensed versions also occur, such as in *EA* 16: "For you, your household, and your country, may all go well" (*ana kâša ana bītka u mātka lū šulmu*) and *EA* 44: "May all go well with the lord, my father" (*ana maḥar bēlī abiya gabba lū šulmu*).

<sup>215</sup> In *EA* 44 the son of the Hittite king refers to Pharaoh as his "father" and to himself as Pharaoh's "son" in addition to identifying himself as the biological son of the king of Hatti. Also, in 2 Kings 8:9 Ben-Hadad, king of Damascus, when asking Elisha if he will recover from illness, refers to himself as "your son" (*binkā*) and in 2 Kgs 16:7 Ahaz calls himself "your servant and your son" (*'abdēkâ ûbinkâ 'ānī*) when petitioning Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for help in fighting the Arameans.



Nabal to look favorably on those giving his message (*wěyimṣě'û hanně'ārîm hēn bē'ênēkā*).

Nabal, however, answers David with invective, saying (1 Sam 25:10-11):

Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? Today there are many servants who break away from their masters! Shall I then take my bread and my wine and the meat I have butchered for my sheepshearers and give them to men who come from I know not where?

*mî dāwid ûmî ben-yišāy hayyôm rabbû 'ăbādîm hammitpārēšîm 'iš mippēnē 'ādônāw wēlāqahî 'et-laḥmî wē'et-yēnî<sup>216</sup> wē'ēt ṭibhātî 'ăšer ṭābahî lēgōzēzāy wēnātattî la'ănošîm 'ăšer lō' yāda'tî 'ē mizzeh hēmmā*

While David's request is assiduously courteous, Nabal's response is overtly rude and derogatory. Nabal's questioning of David's identity ("who is David?") is a refusal of recognition intended as an insult (cf. Judg 9:38; 1 Sam 17:26; Ex 5:2).<sup>217</sup> Nabal also shows that he has some knowledge about David's situation with Saul, but he alludes to this in a deprecating way, saying that David is nothing but a run-away servant. This not only puts the fault on David, but also says his situation is commonplace. Nabal also questions the origin of David's men, a derogatory snub against this group of disenfranchised individuals.<sup>218</sup> Ultimately, Nabal refuses to provide hospitality for David, and rejecting this offer of diplomatic friendship opens the door for hostilities. Hospitality is an important theme in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>219</sup> and within biblical narrative, a

---

<sup>216</sup> LXX has *kai ton oinou mou*, the equivalent of Hebrew *w't yyny* "and my wine." Wine would make more sense on a feast day, but water would be the *lectio difficilior*. See Driver, *Hebrew Text*, 153-154, who prefers the reading of "wine" (*yēnî*), and explains the MT's "water" (*mēmî*) as an example of *lapsus calami* since water is often paired with "bread."

<sup>217</sup> See George W. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas, 14-26.

<sup>218</sup> See similarly Levenson, "1 Sam 25," 15.

<sup>219</sup> See Michael Herzfeld, "'As in Your Own House': Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. David D. Gilmore; Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 75-89; Stewart Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 29 (1984): 37-59; Julian Pitt-Rivers, "The

violation of hospitality often foreshadows something ominous, particularly for the violator(s).<sup>220</sup> From Nabal's words alone, one might assume he is trying to provoke David to fight, though in the rest of the narrative, "fool" that he is, he seems unprepared for any retaliation and oblivious to the potential damage his harm statement could bring.

Not surprisingly, when David's men inform him of Nabal's response, David wants vengeance. He takes his four hundred men, all armed, to seek redress for Nabal's insults and swears to kill all male members of Nabal's line (1 Sam 25:13; 22). It is then fortunate—or providential—that it is Abigail, a woman, who intercedes for Nabal. After David's messengers leave, one of Nabal's servants tells Abigail what has transpired. Even Nabal's servant does not respect him, calling him a "good-for-nothing" (*ben-bēliyya 'al*) and saying that no one can reason with Nabal, which is why he instead informs Abigail of the precarious situation (1 Sam 20:17). The servant verifies what David's men had said about protecting Nabal's sheep (1 Sam 30:15-16) and astutely predicts that David will retaliate for the insult (1 Sam 30:17). Without telling her husband, Abigail rushes to send her servants with the provisions her husband has refused

---

Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host: Introduction to the Laws of Hospitality," in *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology: Mediterranean Rural Communities and Social Change: Acts of the Mediterranean Sociological Conference, July 1963* (ed. J. G. Persitany; Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1963) 14-30; Victor H. Matthews, Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4, *BTB* 21 (1991):13-21; "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," *BTB* (1992): 3-11; Rebecca A. Wright, *Establishing Hospitality in the Old Testament: Testing the Tool of Linguistic Pragmatics* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1989).

<sup>220</sup> In Genesis 19 the men of Sodom demand that Lot turn over his guests, who happen to be divine messengers, for sexual abuse and Yahweh rains fire on the city as a result. In Judges 19-20 a Levite and his concubine are staying the night in the city of Gibeah but are not offered hospitality except by a sojourner, at which point the men of the city, similarly to Genesis 19, demand that the host surrender his guest for sexual abuse. In this narrative, however, the Levite throws his concubine to the crowd, and the men brutally rape her until she dies. In response to this outrage, the Israelites tribes declare war against Gibeah and decimate the tribe of Benjamin for defending the city. In Judges 5, Sisera, the army commander for the king of Hazor, takes refuge in the tent of Jael, with whose husband Hazor has diplomatic friendship. However, Sisera commands his hostess to lie to anyone who asks her for information, but instead she kills Sisera while he sleeps and informs the Israelites. For an example where hospitality is followed, see Genesis 18, where Abraham entertains three divine visitors and receives the promise that by the next year he will have a son by his wife Sarah.

David and also rides out to meet David herself (1 Sam 30:18-19). When Abigail sees David, she falls prostrate before him and exclaims:

Let the guilt be mine, my lord! Let your maidservant speak to you—hear what your maidservant has to say: Let my lord pay no attention to that good-for-nothing! For as his name is, so is he: his name is “Churl” and churlishness is with him. As for me, your maidservant, I never saw the young men you sent...<sup>221</sup> So now, let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who go about at my lord’s heels. (1 Sam 25:24-25; 27)

*bî-’ānî ’ādōnî he ’āwōn ûtēdabber-nā’ ’āmātkā bē’āzēnēkā ūšma’ ’ēt dibrē  
’āmātekā ’al-nā’ yāšiyim ’ādōnî ’et-libbō ’el-’iš habbēliyya’al hazzeh ’al-  
nābāl kî kišmō ken-hû’ nābāl šēmō ûnēbālā ’immō wa’ānî ’āmātkā lō’  
rā’itî ’et-na’ārē ’ādōnî ’āšer šālāhtî wē’attā habbērākā hazzō’t ’āšer-  
hēbî’ šiphātkā la’dōnî wnittēnā lannē’ārīm hammithallēkīm bēraglê  
’ādōnî*

From her opening words, Abigail already seems better matched with David than Nabal.<sup>222</sup>

Like David’s gracious request to Nabal, Abigail’s speech is meticulously diplomatic.

Before she speaks, Abigail “fell upon her face before David and bowed down to the ground” (*wattippol lē’appē dāwid ’al-pānēhā wattištaḥû ’āreṣ*) and also “fell at his

[David’s] feet” (*wattippol ’al-raglāyw*) (1 Sam 25:23b-24a).<sup>223</sup> Moreover, throughout

her speech Abigail refers to herself as David’s “maidservant” (*’āmātekā*) and calls David

“my lord” (*’ādōnî*), standard diplomatic language.<sup>224</sup> Since she is seeking redress for

<sup>221</sup> I agree with McCarter (*I Samuel*, 394) that 1 Samuel 25:26 is out of place, as it assumes that David has already agreed to Abigail’s plea and decided to stay his hand from vengeance against Nabal (cf. Klein, *I Samuel*, 250). However, Tsumura (*First Book of Samuel*, 588) argues that this is “a good rhetorical ploy.”

<sup>222</sup> Levenson (“1 Sam 25,” 18) makes a similar point but from a different perspective.

<sup>223</sup> There are numerous biblical examples in which bowing prostrate is a gesture of respect, as it is here (cf. Gen 18:2, 19:1, 33:7, 48:12; 1 Sam 24:8; 2 Sam 14:33; 1 Kgs 1:31; 2 Kgs 4:37). Also, the vassal correspondence of the Amarna Letters nearly always opens with a reference to bowing prostrate before Pharaoh: “I fall at the feet of the king, my lord, seven and seven times!” (*sebû u sebû ana šēpē šarri bēliya amqut*). For examples, see EA 52-378 where the beginnings of the letters are preserved.

<sup>224</sup> In the vassal correspondence of the Amarna Letters, Egypt’s vassals refer to themselves as Pharaoh’s “servants” (*ardu*) and call Pharaoh “my lord” (*bēliya*) even though they are kings in their own land. See EA 52-378, as there are examples in nearly every letter, especially in the salutations.

Nabal's offense, Abigail's utilization of diplomatic speech is appropriate, and in her exchange with David she proves herself to be an astute and effective diplomat.

One particularly striking component of Abigail's speech, however, is the way in which she describes her husband Nabal. Like her servant, Abigail also calls Nabal "that good-for-nothing" (*'iš habbēliyya 'al hazzeh*) and further disparages her husband by etymologizing his name, engaging in word play with Nabal and *nābal* "churl." While at first glance it seems surprising for a biblical woman to speak of her husband in such a manner,<sup>225</sup> Levenson has pointed out the rhetorical mastery of Abigail's speech given the circumstances of the story:

Abigail...has to be careful neither to exculpate Nabal nor to appear disloyal to him. To deny her husband's guilt is to sink to his level, earning the undying enmity of David. To 'call a spade a spade' is to break faith with her husband and thus to prove herself unfit for the wifely role....Abigail devises the perfect solution to the dilemma: she intercedes in behalf of Nabal (1 Sam 25:24), although conceding that he has no case and no hope of survival (vv 25-26).<sup>226</sup>

Abigail's rhetorical strategy is to minimize Nabal's importance in the hope that this will make his infraction easier to pardon. She asks David not to "set his heart" (*√šym* with *lēb*) on Nabal's insult, i.e. not to pay attention to him. A similar phrase is used in 2 Samuel 13:20 when Absalom dissuades his sister Tamar from bringing their brother Amnon to justice after he has raped her. Absalom also tells Tamar not to "set" her "heart" (*√šyt* with *lēb*) on the matter, and he eventually Absalom kills Amnon in revenge.<sup>227</sup> Since Nabal's offense lies chiefly in insulting David, it is rhetorically fitting

---

<sup>225</sup> The story, of course, was written from the perspective of David as king and Abigail as David's wife.

<sup>226</sup> Levenson, "1 Sam 25," 19.

<sup>227</sup> See section 6.3 for further analysis of this episode.

that Abigail disparages her husband to diminish the significance of his insult against David.

Abigail continues speaking, though now her focus turns toward the future (1 Sam 25:28-31). She recognizes that David, as Yahweh's chosen, will become king and speaks of Yahweh's making David "a secure house" (*bayīt ne'ēmān*). This phrase is strikingly similar to Nathan's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:16: "your house and your kingship will be secure forever before you"<sup>228</sup>; your throne shall be established forever" (*wēne'man bêtēkā ūmamlaktēkā 'ad-'ôlām lēpānēkā kis'ākā yihyeh nākôn 'ad-'ôlām*). While Abigail predicts David's successful kingship, Nathan's oracle focuses on David's lasting dynasty and thus Nathan expands upon the term "secure" ( $\sqrt{n}'m$ ) by twice including "forever" (*'ôlām*). It is remarkable that the author puts this speech on the lips of a wife of David prior to Nathan's oracle, and this placement highlights the prominence of Abigail within the David Narrative. Though she is not called a prophet as Nathan is (e.g., 2 Sam 7:2), Abigail functions in a similarly prophetic manner within the narrative. Already depicted as an eloquently-spoken character, with these additions to Abigail's speech, especially in language similar to Nathan's prophecy, Abigail appears to utter words of divine provenance. Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 7 is a critical moment for the Davidic royal ideology presented in Samuel-Kings; however, it is Abigail who first alludes to a Davidic dynasty with the phrase *bayīt ne'ēmān*. Thus Abigail's prognostication of the establishment of David's dynasty actually foreshadows Nathan's prophecy of an "everlasting" dynasty.

---

<sup>228</sup> The Septuagint reads "before me" (*lpny*).

Abigail's assurance of David's kingship comes at an important point in the David Narrative, when David is a fugitive from Saul and his ascent to power seems the least likely. Her prediction of Davidic kingship is the third and final such prediction during the wilderness section of the HDR, the other two spoken by Jonathan (1 Sam 23:17) and Saul (1 Sam 24:21). These assertions are brief and in the mouths of the ultimately-doomed Saulides. Dtr chooses to place the most embellished prediction of David's kingship on the lips of David's future wife, a remarkable choice.

Abigail's main argument can be found in 1 Samuel 25:30-31: that vengeance on Nabal's house would become "an obstacle or a stumbling block" (*lēpûqâ ûlēmikšôl lēb*) once Yahweh sets David as "ruler over Israel" (*lēnāgîd 'al-yiśrā'ēl*). David would have "shed blood in vain" (*lišpok-dām ħinnām*) and taken vengeance himself (*ûlēhōšîa 'ādōnî lô*) rather than relying solely upon Yahweh. According to Abigail's reasoning, killing Nabal and all of his male family members would incur bloodguilt, a theme seen elsewhere in the David Narrative. In 1 Samuel 19:5 Jonathan convinces Saul not to kill David by warning him that, unless he has just cause, he will incur bloodguilt: "do not sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause" (*lāmmâ teḥēṭā' bēdām nāqî lēhāmîṭ 'et-dāwid ħinnām*). Also, Shimei, a Saulide, calls David a "man of blood" (*'iš dāmîm*) and accuses David of bloodguilt for the decimation of the house of Saul, saying that Absalom's revolt is Yahweh's recompense (2 Sam 16:6-7).<sup>229</sup> The issue of bloodguilt is also significant within the immediate context of 1 Samuel 25. The story of David's encounter with Abigail comes in between the two episodes in which David

---

<sup>229</sup> In a similar vein, the Chronicles tradition cites the reason that Solomon, not David, builds the Temple in Jerusalem is because David has shed much blood in war (*dām lārōb šāpaktā*), but this contrasts with 2 Samuel 7:5-16 and 1 Kings 5:3.

spares Saul's life. While David's reasoning for sparing Saul is that, as king, he is Yahweh's anointed (*limšīaḥ YHWH* 1 Sam 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11), this would be a particularly significant type of bloodguilt and so is parallel to Abigail's warning to David in 1 Samuel 25. In 1 Samuel 24 and 26, David is encouraged by his followers to do away with Saul but does not, to the shock and admiration of Saul. In 1 Samuel 25, however, the inverse situation occurs—David declares vengeance on Nabal and all male members of his family but Abigail exhorts him not to take this course of action since it will create problems for his future kingship.

Abigail ends her lengthy speech to David by saying, "When Yahweh has done well by my lord, remember your maidservant!" (*wēhēyīb YHWH la'dōnī wēzākartā 'et- 'āmātekā*).<sup>230</sup> David will indeed remember Abigail quite soon. For the meantime, however, he gives her a blessing wherein he praises her astute advice, and expressly admits that Abigail has prevented him from incurring bloodguilt and gaining victory without Yahweh (1 Sam 25:32-34). Besides 2 Samuel 12:13, this is the only other instance in which David makes an admission of guilt, though in this case, the guilt is purely hypothetical since David does not carry out vengeance against Nabal and his household. Finally, David accepts the provisions Abigail has brought with her and then sends her home in peace (1 Sam 25:35).<sup>231</sup>

When Abigail returns home, she finds Nabal very drunk while hosting the sheep-shearing banquet (1 Sam 25:36), so she says nothing to him about her actions until the

---

<sup>230</sup> Gunn (*The Fate of King Saul*, 100-101), Peter D. Miscall (*First Samuel: A Literary Reading* [Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1986], 152), Levenson ("1 Sam 25," 19) and McKenzie (*King David*, 100) suggest that this is a marriage proposal, but I disagree.

<sup>231</sup> I think 1 Sam 25:35 originally came after v. 27.

following day. The next morning, when Abigail tells Nabal what has transpired with David, his “heart died within him; he became a stone” (*wayyāmot libbô bēqirbô wēhû’ hāyâ lē’āben*).<sup>232</sup> About ten days later, Nabal dies, an occurrence specifically attributed to Yahweh by the narrator (1 Sam 25:38): “Yahweh struck Nabal and he died” (*wayyiggop YHWH’et-nābāl wayyāmot*). This is a very important assertion considering that the main point of Abigail’s didactic argument is that David should not attain vengeance by his own power without Yahweh.

When David hears of Nabal’s death, he blesses Yahweh for championing him over Nabal, killing Nabal for his offense against David, and by sending Abigail to prevent David from incurring bloodguilt (1 Sam 25:39). David then immediately proposes marriage to Abigail (1 Sam 25:40): “David sent (word) and spoke with Abigail about taking her as his wife (*wayyišlah dāwid wayēdabber ba’ābīgayīl lēqaḥtāh lō lē’iššā*).<sup>233</sup> Though David sends messengers to present his marriage proposal, Abigail responds as if addressing David. She prostrates herself before David’s messengers and says she is (1 Sam 25:41) “your handmaid, ready to be a slave to wash your servants’ feet” (*hinnēh ’āmātkā lēšiphā lirḥōš raglē ’abdē ’ādōnī*). Again, Abigail is depicted as using diplomatic protocol: she bows prostrate and refers to herself as David’s handmaid, as discussed above. She also calls herself a “slave” (*šiphā*), a lower status servant than a “handmaid” (*āmā*), who washes the feet, not even of David, but his servants. However,

---

<sup>232</sup> Perhaps a stroke (?). In Hebrew the “heart” (*lēb*) is the seat of the intellect, and Nabal is comatose before he dies. However, McKenzie (*King David*, 100-101) and Halpern (*David’s Secret Demons*, 77) speculate that foul play is involved, with Abigail as the prime suspect. Considering the focus on the avoidance of bloodguilt in the story, this seems an odd suggestion. Moreover, it smears one of the most positive female figures in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>233</sup> David’s use of messengers and his “speaking with” her in 1 Samuel 25:39 highly contrasts that of 2 Samuel 11:4, where David sends messengers to Bathsheba and “takes” her (*lqḥ*) with no communication reported.



this is polite diplomatic language and probably not a task Abigail actually intends to perform in her position as David's wife.<sup>234</sup> Abigail's response, then, is one of gracious acceptance. Even when she is no longer in the precarious position of interceding for Nabal, Abigail remains the ultimate diplomat. As her final act in the story, she "rises in haste" (*wattēmahēr wattāqom*), riding a donkey and attended by five maidservants, to meet David and become his wife (1 Sam 25:42).

On a narrative level Abigail plays a preparatory and prophetic role in David's ascent to kingship,<sup>235</sup> showing herself to be a valuable asset by giving him advice that will strengthen his rule over Judah and Israel. As David's wife, Abigail also prepares him for kingship by providing him with wealth. Though widows did not usually inherit land in ancient Israel, their share of inheritance was given in the form of their dowry, and women could further accrue wealth through marriage gifts from the groom's family as well as other gifts.<sup>236</sup> Thus widows in ancient Israel could conceivably be wealthy in "liquid assets." In 1 Samuel 25 Abigail seems to fit the category of wealthy widow—she was the wife of a very wealthy man, and when she sets out to marry David she rides upon a donkey and is attended by five maidservants. David appears not to have any land holdings of his own, and, moreover, has to support his private army in Judah. Marriage to a wealthy widow, such as Abigail, could have been the means by which David attains the wealth necessary to become king of Judah, so it is fitting that Abigail functions in a preparatory role within the narrative.

---

<sup>234</sup> A fairly parallel sense can be found in some of the salutations among the vassal correspondence of the Amarna Letters in which the vassals call themselves "the groom of your horses" (<sup>LU</sup>*kartappi ša sisika*) when, in fact, they were kings of city-states. See *EA* 298-300, 303-306, 311 316, 319-326, 328, 331.

<sup>235</sup> McCarter, describes the story as the "education of a future king" (*1 Samuel*, 401).

<sup>236</sup> See Westbrook and Wells, *Everyday Law*, 99.

Marriage to Abigail would have also provided an alliance to a powerful clan in Judah, specifically near Hebron,<sup>237</sup> since it seems that Abigail continues to have a connection to Nabal after his death and perhaps to an extent represents him, which could explain why she is referred to as Nabal's "wife" (*'ēšet nābāl hakkarmēlî*) even after her marriage to David. Moreover, though we have no knowledge of Abigail's genealogy, as the wife of a wealthy and powerful man it is quite possible that she, too, came from important Judahite stock. Wise though she is in the 1 Samuel 25 narrative, David's marriage to Abigail advances him on his path to becoming king over Judah through alliance with powerful Judahites.

### 3.3.2. Ahinoam: 1 Samuel 25:44

Ahinoam of Jezreel<sup>238</sup> is the mother of Amnon, David's oldest son according to the list of David's sons born in Hebron in 2 Samuel 3:1-5 (cf. 1 Chron 3:1). She is also mentioned in two narrative contexts, though she is not exactly a character. A note about David's marriage to Ahinoam appears in 1 Samuel 25:43, at the end of the story of David's encounter with and subsequent marriage to Abigail: "David had already taken Ahinoam of Jezreel and they both became his wives" (*wē'et- 'āhînō 'am lāqah dāwid miyyizrē 'e' l wattihyēnā gam-šēttēhen lô lēnāšîm*). Ahinoam is mentioned on two other occasions along with Abigail: 1 Samuel 30, the rescue of David and his men's wives and children who have been kidnapped by the Amelikites; and 2 Samuel 2:1-4, David's settlement near Hebron just before he is anointed king of Judah. Both of these episodes

---

<sup>237</sup> Levenson ("1 Sam 25," 25-28) claims that Nabal is the pinnacle of Calebite society and further speculates that David assumes Nabal's chief position through his marriage to Abigail after Nabal's death. This view is reminiscent of arguments discussed in section 3.2 that having sexual relations with a woman in the king's harem is tantamount to usurping the throne. Indeed, for Levenson's "test case" in proving his suggestion about Abigail, he proposes that David takes Saul's wife Ahinoam (27).

<sup>238</sup> LXX<sup>B</sup> has "Israel" instead of Jezreel.

are discussed further below. In both accounts Ahinoam's name comes before Abigail's, which probably indicates that David married Ahinoam previous to Abigail. The use of the perfect tense of the verb *√lqh* "take" in 1 Samuel 25:43 as well as Ahinoam's designation as the mother of David's firstborn in the list of David's sons born at Hebron (2 Sam 3:2) also suggests this situation. Though it seems that David marries Ahinoam before Abigail, in the narrative Ahinoam is only mentioned after David's marriage to Abigail and she only appears alongside the widow of Nabal.

Jezreel is a well-known area in northern Israel but is also a village among the Judahite hill towns south of Hebron listed in Josh 15:56. Saul's wife also has the name Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz (1 Sam 14:50), and this concurrence of names has led to the suggestion that Saul's wife Ahinoam and David's wife Ahinoam were the same person.<sup>239</sup> Though this could be the case, the textual evidence suggests that they should be seen as distinct individuals. Though the northern Jezreel Valley is near much of Saul's activity, his wife Ahinoam has the patronymic "daughter of Ahimaaz," (*bat-ʾāhīmāʿaš*), which is never given of David's wife Ahinoam, nor is Saul's wife mentioned

---

<sup>239</sup> Jon Levenson, "1 Samuel 25," 27; idem and Baruch Halpern, "Political Import of David's Marriages," 513-516. They cite the fact that the name Ahinoam is not found elsewhere in the Bible and find it suspicious that the only two biblical women of this name are associated with David and ultimately conclude that before fleeing Saul's court David had made a formal attempt at Saul's throne via a sexual liaison with Saul's wife. Their proposal would help explain the following enigmas: 1) why Ahinoam is always listed before Abigail (1 Sam 30:5; 2 Sam 2:2; 3:2-3); 2) Saul's angry outburst at Jonathan in 1 Sam 20, where he refers to Jonathan's mother as a "perversely rebellious woman" (*ben naʾāwat hammardūt*) and cites "the shame of your mother's nakedness" (*ūlēbōšet ʿerwat ʾimmekā*), but see my discussion in section 4.5; and 3) 2 Samuel 12:8, where Yahweh, via Nathan, tells David "I gave you your master's house, your master's women in your lap" (*wāʾetnā lēkā ʾet-bēt ʾādōnēkā wēʾet-nēšē ʾādōnēkā bēhēqekā*), which seems to indicate that David has taken over sexual possession of Saul's women.

In addition to my arguments in the text above, I would add, regarding Levenson and Halpern's use of 2 Samuel 12:8, that this is the only reference to David taking Saul's women, which most likely would have happened after he became king over Israel and Judah, not before. According to 2 Samuel 3, Ishbaal has control (at least nominally) over Saul's former concubine Rizpah and over Saul's daughter Michal. Why would Ishbaal allow David to marry his sister if he was already married to his mother? Levenson and Halpern argue that this story was suppressed because it would have depicted David as an adulterer and coming to the throne through human rather than divine means. However, David is certainly an adulterer in 2 Samuel 11 and the political machinations of his marriage to Michal (both times) are very apparent.

as being from Jezreel. Moreover, considering the close textual connection between Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, another Judahite town south of Hebron, it seems more likely that David's wife Ahinoam originated from Judah. Also, since there are several instances of confusion over women's names and familial status in the David narrative (Merab/Michal; Abigail as David's wife/sister), this could be yet another example. We know very little else about Ahinoam, but we can probably assume that marriage to her benefits David while he is a fugitive in Judah. As David gains power he adds wives from more prominent backgrounds—the wealthy Judahite Abigail, as well as princesses from Geshur and Israel, Ma'acah and Michal, respectively.

### ***3.3.3. Ahinoam and Abigail: 1 Sam 30; 2 Sam 2:1-4***

In the two episodes in which they are mentioned together, 1 Samuel 30 and 2 Samuel 2:1-4, David's wives Ahinoam and Abigail do not play narrative roles, but, nevertheless their political importance to David is evident within both accounts. Both women are deliberately named in each episode along with their place of origin in Judah, which suggests that they both had prominent status. In 1 Samuel 30, Ahinoam and Abigail are among the women and children taken captive by the Amelikites during a raid on the Negeb in which they attack and raze Ziklag, the city given to David by Achish of Gath (1 Sam 30:1). At the time of the raid, David and his men were away in Gath preparing to fight Israel with the Philistines, but Achish's generals question David's loyalty and convince Achish to send him home (1 Sam 29). The Amelikites do not kill any women or children but take them all prisoner (1 Sam 30:2). In verse 5 the text specifically states that "David's two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, widow of

Nabal of Carmel, had also been taken prisoner” (*ûšētê něšê-dāwid nišbû ’āhînō ‘am hayyizrē ‘ēlīt wa ’ābigayil ’ēšet nābāl hakkarmēlī*).

Upon discovering Ziklag in ruins and their women and children abducted, David’s men are despondent to the extent that they speak of stoning him (1 Sam 30:4; 6). The response of David’s men indicates that they hold him responsible for the fate of their families. After all, David is the reason they have been absent from Ziklag, leaving it virtually undefended. However, this episode gives an example of David’s leadership during trying times and his success in battle with Yahweh’s help. Using the priest Abiathar’s ephod, David inquires of Yahweh whether he will overtake the raiders and rescue the captives (1 Sam 30:7-8).<sup>240</sup> He receives a positive response, so he pursues the Amelikites and rescues all of the wives and children taken prisoner (1 Sam 30:9-19). 1 Samuel 30:18 specifies that Ahinoam and Abigail are among the rescued women and children, saying that “David also rescued his two wives” (*wē’et-šēttē nāšāw hiššîl dāwid*). The rescue of David’s wives is crucial for David’s pursuit of power—without them, he loses important alliances with Judahites.

Along with the wives and children, David also acquires all the plunder of the Amalekites had acquired from their raids throughout the Negev (1 Sam 30:19-20; 1, 14). David distributes the plunder among his men but also sends portions to Judahite cities near and to the south of Hebron (1 Sam 30:21-31). Thus at the same time, David defeats the raiders who have been terrorizing the Judahite Negev and uses the spoil to enrich the

---

<sup>240</sup> The ephod was worn by the chief priest, but since here it is used for divination purposes, it possibly also stored the Urim and Thummim. These items represented two alternatives, so questions were addressed to the deity in a binary format. See discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 239; *II Samuel* 153-154. It is noteworthy that David, the future king, seemingly manipulates the ephod rather than Abiathar, and David will also lead the cultic procession of the transfer of the ark in 2 Samuel 6. However, this could also be elliptical language, meaning that David inquired of Yahweh through Abiathar.

region, actions which would certainly strengthen David's ties in Judah.<sup>241</sup> This account helps prepare the reader for David's anointing as king by the elders of Judah in 2 Samuel 2:4, an episode that also mentions Ahinoam and Abigail and includes the families of David's men.

After the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1 Sam 31), David becomes king of Judah, as described in 2 Samuel 2:1-4. After Ziklag is attacked, David and his men need a new town in which to settle. David inquires of the divine oracle whether he should go up to Hebron and receives a positive response (2 Sam 2:1),<sup>242</sup> so David and his men, as well as their families settle in the cities around Hebron (2 Sam 2:2-3).<sup>243</sup> In particular, the text points out that David goes to Hebron "along with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, wife of Nabal the Carmelite" (*wəgam šəttê nāšâw 'ăḥîô 'am hayyizē 'ēlîl wa 'ăbîgayîl 'ēšet nābāl hakkarmēlî*), both of whom are from towns just south of Hebron.<sup>244</sup> After David and his men, with their families, settle in Hebron, the men of Judah then come and anoint David king over the house of Judah (2 Sam 2:4).<sup>245</sup> David has paved a political path to kingship in Hebron by marrying two prominent women from the area as well as by enriching the region after rescuing his local wives. Thus even

---

<sup>241</sup> McCarter, *I Samuel*, 436-437, suggests that "the entire Ziklag pericope may be said to demonstrate a historical basis for a bond between David and the people of the Judahite Negev as surely as the preceding stories do for the Wilderness of Judah and specifically the area east of Hebron." Cf. also Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 229; Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 646; and Klein, *I Samuel*, 284.

<sup>242</sup> This demonstrates that David's settlement at Hebron is Yahweh's will, despite the obvious political implications, cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 83; Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 248; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989), 22.

<sup>243</sup> According to Hertzberg (*I & II Samuel*, 248) this information is included to show that the relocation is permanent.

<sup>244</sup> See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 84.

<sup>245</sup> Perhaps the narrative presents a military takeover as a peaceful resettlement and an elected kingship (?).

though Ahinoam and Abigail do not play narrative roles in 1 Samuel 30 and 2 Samuel 2:1-4, their political importance for David is indicated by specific references to them in both episodes.

### **3.4. *Wives of the King***

#### **3.4.1. *Lists of David's Sons: 2 Samuel 3:2-5; 5:13-16***

2 Samuel 3:2-5 provides a list of David's sons born at Hebron that includes the names of their mothers.<sup>246</sup> A parallel list can be found in 1 Chronicles 3:1-3, though some of the details differ. The first woman listed is the aforementioned Ahinoam of Jezreel, the mother of David's first-born son Amnon, who will feature prominently in 2 Samuel 13 as the rapist of his half-sister Tamar. The mother of David's second son is Abigail of Carmel,<sup>247</sup> the widow of Nabal. Abigail's son is called Chileab in the MT, Daluiah in LXX, and Daniel in 1 Chronicles 3:1.<sup>248</sup> Nothing more is said about this son, leading commentators to assume that he died before the events of David's succession.<sup>249</sup> David's third wife listed is Ma'acah, daughter of Talmai, the king of Geshur in the Golan in northeastern Palestine. She is the mother of Absalom, who will flee to Geshur after killing his half-brother Amnon and spend three years under the protection of his maternal grandfather (2 Sam 13:37-39). Since David is not able to extradite Absalom (2 Sam

---

<sup>246</sup> It is not clear to me whether the list pre-dates the narratives or is dependent on them, so it is important to be careful in using this information.

<sup>247</sup> 1 Chronicles 3:1 has *l'bygyl 'št nbl hkrmly* "Abigail, the wife of Nabal of Carmel," similar to her designation in 2 Sam 2:2.

<sup>248</sup> LXX has *dalouia*, 4QSam<sup>a</sup> *dl[ ]*, Josephus (Ant 7.21) has *daniēlos*, similar to 1 Chronicles 3:1. See McCarter (*II Samuel*, 101) who provides a plausible explanation for the corruption of the MT by noting that the beginning of the next word ("by Abigail") is *l'b* and how easily *dalet* and *kap* can be confused. Anderson (2 *Samuel*, 49) suggests that MT's *kl'b* is a form of "Caleb," the tribe to which Abigail's first husband, and perhaps she, too, belonged.

<sup>249</sup> See Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 254; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 102; Anderson, 2 *Samuel*, 49.

13:38-39),<sup>250</sup> this indicates that Geshur is a prominent polity. Presumably, Absalom might also receive support from Geshur when he revolts against David. Thus marriage to Ma‘acah, a Geshurite princess, would be a considerable political benefit to David, though the example of Absalom demonstrates that internal family politics can potentially disrupt marriage alliances.

The mother of David’s fourth son is Haggith, mother of Adonijah, who will attempt unsuccessfully to assume David’s throne and later be killed by Solomon after his accession to the throne (1 Kgs 1; 2:13-25). Abital is the mother of David’s fifth son Shephatiah and Eglah bore David’s sixth son Ithream, but neither wife is mentioned again. Eglah is the only woman in the list with the designation “wife of David” (*’ēšet dāwid*). However, since we know from narrative contexts that Michal, Ahinoam, and Abigail are also David’s wives, this designation is probably meant to be applied to all of the aforementioned women. Less is known about the identities of David’s fourth, fifth, and sixth wives, but considering the backgrounds of Ahinoam, Abigail, Ma‘acah, and Michal, these women most likely had particular socio-political importance. Indeed, that the mothers’ names are included in this list of David’s sons probably indicates a high status for these women since another list of David’s sons (2 Sam 5:13-16) does not give the mothers’ names.

2 Samuel 5:13-16 names David’s sons born at Jerusalem. The list is introduced by the notice that “David took more consorts and wives from Jerusalem” (*wayyiqqah dāwid ‘ôd pilagšîm wēnāšîm miyrûšālaïm*), which could indicate that David either takes over the already-existing harem of Jerusalem or that he married women from his new

---

<sup>250</sup> See the argument by McCarter, *II Samuel*, 344.



capital city to make alliances with the Jebusites he had conquered.<sup>251</sup> This is the first time David is mentioned as taking *pīlagšīm*. Until this point in the narrative, David has taken wives (*’iššâ, nāšīm*), but now that he has become king over Israel and Judah he can afford to have sexual liaisons with women without political import. David’s consorts will figure in Absalom’s revolt (2 Sam 16:20-23), as well as in the succession of kingship to Solomon (1 Kgs 1-2). Though the names of the sons’ mothers are not given in this passage, Solomon’s mother, the well-known Bathsheba, appears elsewhere as a narrative character in 2 Samuel 11-12 and 1 Kings 1-2<sup>252</sup> and will be the final wife of David we discuss.

#### **3.4.2. Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25; 1 Kings 1:11-31**

So far, all of David’s marriages have occurred as part of his ascent to power. While the lists of David’s sons make clear that David continued to take wives after becoming king over Israel and Judah, only one marriage is narrated after David’s ascendancy to power is complete: his marriage to Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah, who will become the mother of David’s successor Solomon.

##### *David’s Marriage to Bathsheba: 2 Sam 11:2-12:25*

I discuss 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 in detail in section 6.4, so I will only give a few brief comments here as they relate specifically to this chapter. 2 Samuel 11 recounts the story of David’s illicit sexual encounter with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his army

---

<sup>251</sup> 1 Chronicles 14:3-4 repeats this passage but has “in Jerusalem” (*biyrûšālāim*), which would be more expected. The Chronicles version also deletes *pīlagšīm*, giving unquestionable legitimacy to the sons named, which indicates that the Chronicler is cleaning up the text and so “from” is probably the original reading.

<sup>252</sup> 1 Chronicles 3:5 names Bathsheba, who is there called “Bathshua, daughter of Ammiel” (*bat-šûa ‘bat-’ammi’ēl*), as not only Solomon’s mother but also the mother of three other (older) sons of David: Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan.

officers. When Bathsheba becomes pregnant, a serious situation since her husband is away at war, David's calls him back from the front in the hopes that Uriah will have sex with his wife and assume the child is his. When his attempts fail, David arranges for Uriah to be killed in battle, actions for which David, but especially the women and children in his family, are severely punished by Yahweh. After mourning her husband's death, Bathsheba becomes David's wife and bears him a son (2 Sam 11:27).

2 Samuel 11:4 makes clear that sexual relations take place between David and Bathsheba while her husband is still alive: "he [David] took her, and he entered her<sup>253</sup> and lay with her" (*wayyiqqāḥehā wayyābō' 'ēlēhā wayyiškab 'immāh*). Both  $\sqrt{bw}$  "enter" and  $\sqrt{skb}$  "lay," while having other primary meanings, are also terms used euphemistically for sexual intercourse.<sup>254</sup> In 2 Samuel 11 David is portrayed as motivated by sexual desire but does not seem particularly eager for marriage. David sends Bathsheba home after having sexual relations with her (2 Sam 11:4), and when he is informed that she is pregnant, he attempts to pass off his child as Uriah's (2 Sam 11:6-13). While this could be due to the fact that Bathsheba is already the wife of Uriah, it could also indicate that David does not think he has anything to gain politically from a marriage to Bathsheba. Thus Bathsheba is the inverse of David's other wives, who benefit David politically but with whom sexual relations are never mentioned.

However, the only instance in the David Narrative in which sex is described within marriage also involves Bathsheba. After David has married Bathsheba, the

---

<sup>253</sup> Reading with LXX<sup>B</sup>, which has *kai eisēlthen pros autēn*, reflecting Hebrew *wyb' 'lyh*, a masculine subject and feminine object.

<sup>254</sup> For  $\sqrt{b'w}$ , other examples include: Genesis 16:2; 19:31; 30:3-4, 16; 38:8; Deuteronomy 22:13; 25:5; Joshua 2:3. For  $\sqrt{skb}$ : Genesis 19:32, 33, 35; 26:10; 30:15; 34:2, 7; 35:22; 39:12,14; Leviticus 15:18, 24; Numbers 5:13, 19; 1 Samuel 2:22; 2 Samuel 13:11, 14. For further discussion, see Coogan, *God and Sex*, 1-18.

narrator explicitly describes sexual relations occurring between them in the birth notice of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24). The previous son, conceived as a result of illicit sex in 2 Sam 11:4, has died as part of Yahweh's punishment of David. After this tragedy, "David consoled Bathsheba, his wife. He entered her and lay with her, and she bore a son. She called him Solomon" (*wayēnaḥēm dāwid 'ēt bat-šeba 'ištō wayyābō 'ēlēhā wayyiškab 'immāh wattēled bēn wattiqrā*<sup>255</sup> *'et-šēmō šēlōmōh*). The term "consoled" here probably refers to the end of a period of mourning,<sup>256</sup> so we should understand David not necessarily as "comforting" Bathsheba but as resuming regular marital relations.<sup>257</sup> In due course, Bathsheba bears another son and gives him a name which references the son that has been lost.<sup>258</sup> It is significant that the only woman David is described as having sexual relations with, both illicitly and within marriage, is Bathsheba, the mother of David's successor, and ironically, it is his only marriage that seems not to have been politically motivated. Indeed, this distinct wife of David will play a pivotal role in the succession of David's throne to her son, Solomon.

---

<sup>255</sup> Reading *qērē* of MT; cf. Syr., Targ. The *kētib* of MT has the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular form *wyqr* "he called." As feminist scholars have long noted, there is a certain power in both having and giving a name, and indeed, Bathsheba will exert considerable influence over her son Solomon's succession to David's throne.

<sup>256</sup> Despite David's odd mourning behavior (2 Sam 12:15-20), we can speculate from Solomon's name that Bathsheba ascribed to a more traditional mourning custom.

<sup>257</sup> See *HALOT*, 688-689.

<sup>258</sup> For arguments for the meaning of Solomon's name, see Stamm, "Der Name des Königs Salomo," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 16 (1960): 285-297; Gerlman, "Die Wurzel *šlm*," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 (1973): 1-14; Veijola, "Salom—der Erstgeborene Bathsebas," in Emerton, *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament* (VT Supp. 30; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 230-250; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 303, who provides a synopsis and discussion of the previous views; and Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 401-403.

*Bathsheba's Role in Solomon's Succession: 1 Kings 1:11-31*

In the rest of this section, we will examine Bathsheba's role in 1 Kings 1:11-31, as this episode, though focused on Solomon's succession, presents a detailed interaction between David and Bathsheba as husband and wife.<sup>259</sup> In concert with the prophet Nathan,<sup>260</sup> Bathsheba convinces David to name Solomon as successor in the midst of a bid for power by another of his sons, Adonijah.<sup>261</sup> Though within the episode Bathsheba

---

<sup>259</sup> 1 Kings 1 is usually regarded as part of the David Narrative, as it relates Solomon's succession to the throne. However, the style and content seem slightly different from the books of Samuel. 1 Kings 1 makes an overt connection between Adonijah and Absalom, which means that this episode must have been written after the bulk of the material related to Absalom's revolt was set down.

<sup>260</sup> An odd pairing considering Nathan's role in 2 Samuel 12, however, if Adonijah has excluded both Nathan and Solomon, they are probably already allies. Perhaps there was a memory of Bathsheba being associated with Nathan, hence his involvement in 2 Samuel 12 (?).

<sup>261</sup> Zafira Ben-Barak has identified several examples in the political history of Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine that bear some resemblance to the biblical story of Bathsheba's successful efforts to place Solomon on the throne. Ben-Barak names a total of seven examples besides Bathsheba: Aḥatmilku, mother of Ammistamru II of Ugarit (14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE); Puduḥepa, wife of Hattušiliš III and mother of Tudḥaliya IV of Hatti (13<sup>th</sup> century BCE); Ma'acah, the mother of Abijah of Judah (10<sup>th</sup> century BCE); TM, the mother of Kilamuwa of Y'dy-Sam'al (9<sup>th</sup> century BCE), though it is not entirely clear to me from the text that this indicates his mother, Sammuramat, mother of Adad-nirari III of Assyria (9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE); Naqi'a-Zakūtu, wife of Sennacherib of Assyria who influenced the choice of Esarhaddon, and later Aššurbanipal as successors (8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE); Adad-Guppi, mother of Nabonidus of Babylon (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE); and Atossa, the mother of Xerxes I of Persia (6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE). With the exception of Puduḥepa of Hatti, all of these women were mothers of younger sons and seemed to wield considerable power and prestige during their sons' reigns. See Ben-Barak, "The Queen Consort and the Struggle for Succession to the Throne," in *La Femme dans le Proche-Orient Antique: Compte Rendu de la XXXIII<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Paris, 7-10 Juillet 1986* (ed. Jean-Marie Durand; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1987), 33-40; and his related article, "The Status and Right of the Gēbīrā," *JBL* 110 (1991): 23-34.

From Egypt, we also know of an unsuccessful attempt by a pharaoh's wife, Tiye, to place her son Pentawere on the throne in the harem conspiracy against Ramses III. Though the conspiracy possibly resulted in the death of Ramses III, his heir apparent succeeded him and became Ramses IV. The conspirators were put on trial and many of them forced to commit suicide. See the Turin Juridical Papyrus and Papyri Rollin and Lee. Easily accessible translations can be found in Ritner, *CoS* III, 27-30; *ANET* 214-216. See also the discussions by Susan Redford, *The Harem Conspiracy: the Murder of Ramses III* (Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002) and Hans Goedicke, "Was Magic Used in the Harem Conspiracy against Ramesses III? (P. Rollin and P. Lee)," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 49 (1963): 71-92.

These examples do not affect the historicity of the account of Solomon's succession narrated in 1 Kings 1; however, they provide some context for the literary portrayal of a succession struggle. Though rare, these examples attest to the relative power that certain kings' wives could attain and suggest that it would have been conceivable for the writer of 1 Kings 1 to present Solomon's mother as part of a highly orchestrated strategy to place Solomon on the throne, which also included other powerful (male) figures from David's administration.

appears to David as his wife, she acts as Solomon's mother, marking yet another difference between Bathsheba and David's other wives who are not described as mothers in a narrative context.<sup>262</sup>

The book of Kings opens near the end of David's reign. David is described in 1 Kings 1:1 as "old, advanced in years" (*zāqēn bā' bayyāmīm*) and "unable to keep warm" (*wēlō' yiḥam lō*). Though a beautiful virgin, Abishag the Shunnamite, is procured for him (1 Kgs 1:3-4), he is also seemingly unable to engage in sexual relations since the text clearly states that "the king did not know her" (*wēhammelek lō' yēdā'āh*). Possibly in response to the king's weakness (represented by body temperature and impotence), David's son Adonijah declares himself king (1 Kgs 1:5). Adonijah gives a sacrificial feast and invites the other sons of David, as well as "all the men of Judah, the king's servants" (*kol-'anšē yēhūdā 'abdē hammelek*);<sup>263</sup> however, he does not include the prophet Nathan, David's army commander Benaiah, or, most critically, David's son Solomon, which indicates that there is already a power struggle at work between Adonijah and Solomon (1 Kgs 1:9-10).<sup>264</sup>

The story then turns to the prophet Nathan, who confers with Bathsheba about Adonijah's actions. Nathan exhorts Bathsheba to take his advice so that her life and

---

<sup>262</sup> I am comparing Bathsheba to the wives who appear as narrative characters. Therefore, I am only considering Michal, Abigail, and, to some extent, Ahinoam. Michal, we are expressly told, is not a mother (2 Sam 6:23), and, though Ahinoam and Abigail are included in the list of David's sons in 2 Samuel 3:2-5, their narrative roles are as wives.

Esther Fuchs (*Sexual Politics*, 169) argues that "later biblical narratives are reluctant to let the same wife-figure function as 'good' conjugal partner and maternal agent." Though Bathsheba is both, Fuchs argues that her conjugal role is negative, which is true in regard to 2 Samuel 11 but does not take 2 Samuel 12:24 into account.

<sup>263</sup> This phrase probably refers to David's court. The members of Saul's court are also referred to as his "servants" (*'abdē šā'ul/'ābādāyw*) in 1 Samuel 18:22-23, 26; 19:1; 22:7.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: SCM Press, 1970), 84.

Solomon's life may be saved (1 Kgs 1:12).<sup>265</sup> Nathan's view of the situation suggests that, once in power, Adonijah will eliminate any competition for the throne. Nathan's plan is for Bathsheba to speak to King David referencing an alleged promise made to her by David that Solomon would be his successor (1 Kgs 1:13). Specifically, Nathan instructs Bathsheba to say the following words to David: "My lord the king, did you not swear to your handmaid saying, 'Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me and he will sit upon my throne.'? Why, then, has Adonijah become king?" (*hālō' - 'attā 'ādōnī hammelek nišba 'tā la 'āmātkā lē'mor kī-šēlōmōh bēnēk yimlok 'aḥāray wēhū' yēšēb 'al-kis 'ī ūmaddūa' mālak 'ādōnīyāhū*). Then Nathan himself will have an audience with David and corroborate Bathsheba's report (1 Kgs 1:14).

From Nathan's plan, it seems that David still holds all the power as king, and this will prove to be the case later in the episode. Nathan and Bathsheba are not really concerned about David's power being threatened but about their own positions—and lives—in the new regime, but their speeches to David will imply that Adonijah has usurped power. Nathan's plan for Solomon's succession relies on an alleged previous promise David had made to Bathsheba, but there is no reference elsewhere to a promise of Solomonic succession. Given the description of David's advanced age (1 Kgs 1:1) and the two mentions of his lack of awareness, both in Nathan's advice to Bathsheba (1 Kgs

---

<sup>265</sup> Halpern (*David's Secret Demons*, 396) speculates that the story could be inversion of what would have probably occurred, i.e. that Bathsheba, not Nathan, is the mastermind behind the succession. However, from the list of men who Adonijah excludes from his banquet, it seems that Solomon already has significant support within David's government. Thus it is difficult to argue whether Bathsheba is instigator or conspirator.

1:11) and Bathsheba's audience with David (1 Kgs 1:18), it seems suggestive that the two are manipulating the king's senility.<sup>266</sup>

Bathsheba enters David's chamber (*heder*) to speak with the king (1 Kgs 1:15). While little is known about the architecture in Jerusalem during David's reign, it seems that the writer of this passage assumes that this room is the king's bedchamber.<sup>267</sup> If we understand David's chamber (*heder*) in this passage as a type of inner bedchamber with limited access, as I will discuss further below, it is a location replete with sexual innuendo—an appropriate location for a husband and wife to meet.<sup>268</sup> When Bathsheba enters David's chamber, the text again describes David as “very old” (*zāqēn mē'ōd*) and mentions that Abishag, the beautiful virgin brought to make David “warm” (*ham*) (1 Kgs 1:1-4) is “ministering to” (*mēšārat*) him (1 Kgs 1:15). The Hebrew term *šrt*, often denoting ritual or cultic service, also occurs in secular contexts, as in this passage, where

---

<sup>266</sup> McKenzie (*King David*, 178) and Halpern (*David's Secret Demons*, 396-397), both take this view. Halpern furthermore speculates that Adonijah was David's choice for king but cites that David tends to rely on hearsay, as in 2 Samuel 1; 12; 14.

<sup>267</sup> While nothing is known of the spatial layout of historical David's palace, if he had one, a separation of the king's consorts could have been applied to David when 1 Kings 1 was written (cf. the book of Esther). For example, the Middle Assyrian palace decrees show circumscribed existence for palace women (see E. Weidner, “Hof-und Harems-Erlasse assyrischer Könige aus dem 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.” *AfO* 17 [1954/56]: 257-293; G. M. Beckman and B. Foster, “Assyrian Scholarly Texts in the Yale Babylonian Collection,” in *A Scientific Humanist: Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs*, Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9 [E. Leichty, et al., eds.; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1988], 1-26; and Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [SBLWAW; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], 195-212). Moreover, the book of Esther describes two guarded confines for the king's concubines, called the “house of the women” (*bēt hannāšīm*), one for the virgins and one for those whom the king had known sexually (Est 2:3-14). Halpern (*David's Secret Demons*, 396) also assumes privacy for an audience with the king, though not different locations for Bathsheba (initially) and Nathan.

<sup>268</sup> This type of space figures also into two other stories involving David: Michal's deception of Saul's messengers feigning David's illness in their marital bed (1 Sam 19:11-17), and also David's son Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:1-22). The term *heder* occurs in 2 Samuel 13:10 as well, though not in 1 Samuel 19, which just mentions the action taking place within David's “house” (*bēt dāwid*). Both stories have significant political consequences—David escaping Saul and Michal demonstrating her loyalty to David in 1 Samuel 19, and the sexual crime in 2 Samuel 13 that leads to fratricide by Absalom, fracturing his relationship with his father David, which will eventually result in revolt. Deception is an important component of both of these narratives, which further leads me to speculate there could also be a deceptive element in Bathsheba's audience with David.

it indicates service to an individual, particularly royal service. In several examples  $\sqrt{srt}$  seems to designate a close personal attendant (Gen 39:4, 40:4; 2 Sam 13:17ff; 1 Kgs 19:21; 2 Kgs 4:43, 6:15; 2 Chr 22:8); however, if this is how we are to understand Abishag's "ministering," it would be the only instance of a woman in this role.<sup>269</sup> Considering the focus on Abishag's exceeding beauty (1 Kgs 1:3-4), that her duties included "lying" with the king ( $\sqrt{skb}$ ), and Solomon's violent refusal of Adonijah's proposition to marry Abishag in 1 Kgs 2:22-25, which he interprets as a threat to his kingship, it seems that Abishag's intended primary duty to king David is sexual in nature, if not in function. Thus, I tentatively propose that Abishag's "ministrations" ( $\sqrt{srt}$ ) mentioned here euphemistically indicate her unsuccessful attempts to arouse the king sexually.

Abishag's presence in David's personal chamber (*heder*) further suggests a sexual role for her though no intercourse actually takes place. Bathsheba, then, encounters a potentially sexualized situation when she enters David's chamber and sees Abishag "ministering" ( $\sqrt{srt}$ ) to the king. In 2 Samuel 11, David's voyeuristic gaze gets him into trouble, but in 1 Kings 1:15 the scene is described from Bathsheba's perspective.<sup>270</sup> Now the woman who was the victim of David's overwhelming lust and abuse of power witnesses the king's sexual and political impotence. Though Bathsheba herself is not sexualized in this episode, she is still connected to sexuality. While Abishag's sexual "ministrations" to the king are ineffective, Bathsheba successfully rouses David to political action.

---

<sup>269</sup> Abishag is also called a *sōkenet* ( $\sqrt{skn}$ ) in 1 Kgs 1:2, 4. The meaning of this term will be further explored in section 5.4.

<sup>270</sup> Presenting a female's point of view is a rarity in biblical narrative.



Despite the semi-private setting, Bathsheba's speech resembles a formal address to a king. She uses diplomatic language throughout her speech, referring to David as "my lord" ('*ādōnî*) and herself as his "maidservant" ('*āmā*), which is reminiscent of Abigail's diplomatic speech to David in 1 Sam 25.<sup>271</sup> Upon entering, Bathsheba bows in obeisance to David (1 Kgs 1:16) and when David asks what troubles her, she responds (1 Kgs 1:17-21):

My lord, you yourself swore to your maidservant by Yahweh your God:  
 'Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit upon my throne.' Yet now Adonijah has become king, but you, my lord the king, do not know. He has sacrificed a great many oxen, fatlings, and sheep, and he has invited all the king's sons and Abiathar the priest and Joab commander of the army; however, your servant Solomon he has not invited. So now, O my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you to tell them who shall sit upon the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise, when my lord the king lies down with his fathers, my son Solomon and I will be regarded as traitors.

*'ādōnî 'attâ nišba 'tā baYHWH 'ēlōhēkâ la 'āmātekâ kî-šēlōmōh bēnēk  
 yimlok 'aḥārāy wēhû 'yēšēb 'al kis 'î wē 'attâ hinnēh 'ādōnîyāh mālāk  
 wē 'attâ 'ādōnî hammelek lō 'yādā 'tā wayyizbah šôr ūmērî'-wēšō 'n lārōb  
 wayyiqrā' lēkol-bēnē hammelek ūl'ēbyātār hakkōhēn ūl'ēyō 'āb šar  
 haššābā' wēlišlōmōh 'abdēkâ lō' qārā' wē 'attâ 'ādōnî hammelek 'ēnē kol-  
 yišrā'ēl 'ālēkâ lēhaggîd lāhem mî yēšēb 'al-kissē' 'ādōnî-hammelek  
 'aḥārāyw wēhāyā kiškab 'ādōnî-hammelek 'īm 'ābōtāyw wēhāyîti 'ānî  
 ūbēnî šēlōmōh ḥaṭṭā'īm*

Bathsheba begins her speech by parroting Nathan's words to her about David's promise of Solomon's succession, but adding that David swore before Yahweh. After this, however, Bathsheba diverges from Nathan's suggested speech. Instead of subtly indicating David's obliviousness by asking, "Why is Adonijah king?" as Nathan has

<sup>271</sup> Cf. the wise woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14. Similarly, as queen, Esther also uses highly diplomatic language when speaking to King Ahasuerus. These examples suggest that the writer is consciously depicting Bathsheba as following royal protocol.

advised her,<sup>272</sup> Bathsheba directly points out David's lack of awareness, stating matter-of-factly that he "does not know" (*lō' yādā 'tā*) that Adonijah has declared himself king.

Bathsheba then goes beyond the words Nathan has given her and elaborates upon the details of Adonijah's pretensions, repeating much of the same information about Adonijah's sacrificial feast that is described by the narrator in 1 Kings 1:9-10. However, the only person Bathsheba names as being excluded from Adonijah's feast is Solomon, her son with David. She does not mention that the prophet Nathan, the priest Zadok, and Benaiah, the head of David's professional army, were also not invited. As Solomon's mother, it seems appropriate that her focus is wholly on her son and she would not want to give any hint that she has colluded with these other individuals. Also significant is that, though she refers to Solomon as David's son earlier, here Bathsheba calls Solomon David's "servant," using carefully diplomatic language when mentioning the main focus of her speech. Then she directly calls on David to name his heir apparent, giving a flattering description of David's populace—"the eyes of all Israel" (*'ênê kol-yiśrā'ēl*)<sup>273</sup>—as waiting in expectation for their king to tell them to whom they should give their allegiance when David dies.<sup>274</sup> It is David's responsibility as king to name his successor to help ensure a peaceful transition of power, and Bathsheba, who until this point in her speech has emphasized David's lack of awareness, exhorts him to do his duty as king by implying that he is still in power over a loyal population.

---

<sup>272</sup> This is, in fact, the statement Nathan uses in his own speech to David.

<sup>273</sup> The idea of the "eyes of all Israel" (*'ênê kol-yiśrā'ēl*) as public knowledge is also important for Absalom's public takeover of David's *pīlagšîm* in 2 Samuel 16:22 as well as Nathan's curse, which he says, quoting Yahweh, will take place "before all Israel" (*neged kol-yiśrā'ēl*)

<sup>274</sup> This verse is very important for Rost's theory of a Succession Narrative. See section 2.3.

As the final point in her speech, Bathsheba plays on David's sympathies, saying that if he does not act and Adonijah becomes king, then after David's death both she and Solomon will be "regarded as traitors" (*wəḥāyā...ḥaṭṭā 'îm*)<sup>275</sup> and therefore will be in mortal danger, echoing Nathan's assumption in 1 Kings 1:12. David has already lost three sons for political-theological reasons, and one of these is another son by Bathsheba, the child borne of adultery that is struck down by Yahweh. Moreover, David has already experienced fratricide as a father, and Bathsheba suggests that it will likely happen again if Adonijah rules. (Ironically, this still happens, but the exact opposite of what Bathsheba suggests—it is Solomon who has Adonijah killed in 1 Kings 2.) Though, as apparent in the speech, her primary concern is obviously for her son, Bathsheba includes herself along with Solomon as being in danger from Adonijah. This rhetorical move suggests that David has genuine affection for Bathsheba, which she utilizes to help make her case persuasive. The only one of David's wives whom David is depicted as sexually desiring, Bathsheba potentially plays upon David's sympathetic feelings to garner his political support in the ultimate bid for power—succession to the throne.

While Bathsheba is still talking, the prophet Nathan enters seeking an audience with King David (1 Kgs 1:22-23). As orchestrated, Nathan confirms Bathsheba's report about Adonijah's taking power, though he does not mention the promise of Solomonic succession (1 Kgs 1:24-27). Nathan also describes Adonijah's sacrificial feast, providing similar, but not exactly parallel details to those presented by Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1:25-26). For example, Nathan adds that Adonijah did not invite him, the priest Zadok, Benaiah, or Solomon to the feast, whereas Bathsheba only mentions Solomon being excluded. These

---

<sup>275</sup> Cf. JPS. The root *ḥṭ* literally means "miss the mark," but interpersonally "offend, do wrong, commit a sin." Surely a king would regard those who "do wrong" against him as "traitors."

particular details make Nathan and Bathsheba's information seem credible since corroborate each other's testimonies without exactly parroting one another.<sup>276</sup>

The focus on Adonijah's sacrificial feast is significant, for it connects to the feast in which Absalom invited all the king's sons and then killed Amnon (2 Sam 13:23-39). For the David Narrative, this event marks a break-down in relations between David and Absalom, which eventually leads to a partially successful revolt. The narrator overtly compares Adonijah to Absalom in 1 Kings 1:5-6, describing Adonijah as outfitting himself with chariots, horses, and an escort, as Absalom does before he revolts (2 Sam 15:1), and including the details that Adonijah, like Absalom, is very handsome (cf. 2 Sam 14:25), as well as the specific reference to birth order, that Adonijah is the next son born to David after Absalom. Though the 1 Kings 1 account certainly presents a biased description of Adonijah, it still seems from the text that Adonijah's actions were only to declare himself David's successor in order to secure support in preparation for David's imminent death—not to stage a coup and usurp the throne. However, Nathan and Bathsheba's testimonies suggest that the latter is actually the case, as both of them say that Adonijah has "become the king" (*√mlk*) (1 Kgs 1:18, 25) and make the subtle connection between Adonijah and Absalom, a comparison that would be sure to get a reaction from the aged David. Indeed, as soon as David hears Nathan's description of Adonijah's actions, he summons Bathsheba and takes an oath that he will fulfill his promise to Bathsheba that Solomon will succeed him as king (1 Kgs 1:28-30). In this oath, David references his alleged previous vow to Bathsheba, though it is still not entirely clear whether David in fact remembers making this promise or in his senility he

---

<sup>276</sup> *Contra* Gray (*I & II Kings*, 86-87) who argues that this is merely a literary technique, similar to repetitions seen in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian literary texts.

follows what Bathsheba has told him (1 Kgs 1:17). Bathsheba once again bows in obeisance to David, saying (1 Kgs 1:31): “May my lord King David live forever!” (*yěhî ’ādōnî hammelek dāwid lě’ōlām*), though David’s next narrative appearance, his final instructions to Solomon before he dies (1 Kgs 2:1-12), is his last.

It appears that in this episode Bathsheba and Nathan do not have equivalent access to the person of the king, as it seems that they address him in different locations. Bathsheba initially speaks to David in his chamber (*heder*), and when Nathan comes for his audience with David it is while Bathsheba is still speaking to David ( *’ódennā mēdabberet ’im-hammelek*), presumably still in David’s chamber (1 Kgs 1:22). However, Nathan’s visit seems to take place in a different location. Nathan is announced to the king, and then he “entered the king’s presence” (*wayyābō’ lipnē hammelek*), whereas earlier Bathsheba goes “to the king” ( *’el-hammelek*) in his chamber. Nathan’s address suggests an official audience while Bathsheba’s seems more private, which is appropriate since she is one of David’s wives and so presumably might have access to the king in spaces from which others are restricted. Moreover, after Nathan’s address, David issues a command to summon Bathsheba (*qir’û-lî lēbat-šeba’*), who is clearly not present (1 Kgs 1:28). Bathsheba then, like Nathan, “entered the king’s presence and stood before the king” (*wattābō’ lipnē hammelek watta’āmod*). Once David has told Bathsheba that he will name Solomon king, he again summons Nathan, but also Zadok the priest and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, head of the king’s personal guard, who again enter “the presence of the king” (1 Kgs 1:32). However, if the initial interaction between David and Bathsheba in David’s chamber (*heder*)—with Abishag present—is in a different location from the other royal audiences (*lipnē hammelek*), then it is only

Bathsheba who views Abishag with David. This makes it necessary for Bathsheba and Solomon to control access to Abishag, sexual or otherwise, especially by Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:13-25), since Abishag is the only witness to Bathsheba's orchestrated argument that David had previously promised Solomon the kingship.

Once the news arrives that David has proclaimed Solomon as king, Adonijah's feast comes to an immediate halt and his guests disperse, which demonstrates that David's kingship has never been under threat. Adonijah, anticipating that he is now in danger from Solomon, seeks sanctuary by holding on to the horns of the altar (1 Kgs 1:49-50). It is not David, but Solomon, exercising his newly acquired power, who forgives Adonijah. Solomon grants him his life so long as he remains loyal but warns Adonijah that he shall die if he is treacherous (1 Kgs 1:52), foreshadowing Adonijah's next narrative appearance (1 Kgs 2:13-25). After David's death and Solomon's succession, Bathsheba, Adonijah, and Abishag will once again appear in the same narrative, in which Solomon has Adonijah put to death for requesting to marry Abishag. Bathsheba plays a pivotal role in Adonijah's request, which leads directly to his demise.

### ***3.5. Conclusion***

As presented in the book of Samuel, David comes to rule over Israel and Judah not only through his military prowess and the force of his personality, but also due to politically strategic marriages. Since he is presented as a younger son of a Bethlehemite (1 Sam 16:1-12), David would not have had a strong claim to kingship over Judah and still less over Israel, but his marriages help to justify his kingship. These narratives demonstrate the political advancement brought to David by these marriages and the

importance of the “traffic in women” in David’s quest for the throne. Thus David effectively utilizes the socio-sexual institution of marriage for political gain.

Strikingly, all of David’s wives who appear as narrative characters— Michal, Abigail, and Bathsheba—are married to other men before their marriage (or remarriage) to David. With the significant exception of Bathsheba, however, sexuality does not constitute a particular focus of the stories depicting David and his wives. Sexual relations between David and his wives are not specifically reported in the HDR source of the David Narrative. As indicated above, sex is assumed to be part of these marriages so there is no need to mention sex explicitly regarding Michal, Abigail, Ahinoam, and the list of the mothers of David’s sons. Rather, the stories involving these wives of David present his marriages as justifications for his kingship.

Once David has used marriages to help him gain power, he abuses his power, specifically by committing adultery with Bathsheba. The Bathsheba material comes from a different literary tradition and serves a different purpose. Instead of portraying David’s rise to power, the narratives involving Bathsheba give support for Solomon’s succession by proving his Davidic lineage and showing that he is David’s choice for a successor. Ultimately, the stories about David and his wives function as part of the apologetic purposes of the David Narrative: Michal “loves” David and voluntarily allies herself to David over Saul; Abigail gives assurance of David’s future kingship; and Bathsheba is instrumental in the royal apologetic surrounding Solomon’s birth and succession.

## CHAPTER 4

### ASSUMPTIONS AND ALLIANCES, PART 2: DAVID AND JONATHAN

#### 4.1. Introduction

When it comes to sexuality in the David Narrative, no subject has received as much recent attention as the relationship between David and Jonathan, the son of King Saul. The association between David and Jonathan as described in both narrative and poetry in 1-2 Samuel has been the subject of considerable debate by scholars in the field as well as non-specialists. The details and vocabulary used to describe the interactions between David and Jonathan have led some scholars to view their relationship as erotic or even sexual in nature. Yet, other scholars, primarily specialists in ancient Near Eastern studies, understand the association between David and Jonathan in terms of ancient Near Eastern political treaties and alliances.<sup>277</sup> As the following discussion will make clear, I also interpret the connection between David and Jonathan primarily as a political alliance. However, due to the prevalence of a homoerotic interpretation of David and Jonathan's relationship and because this is a study on sexuality in the story of King David, it is therefore necessary to revisit this topic in some detail.

---

<sup>277</sup> For discussions of treaty language, see especially George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955); Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (ANBib 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963); William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background to the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 23 (1963): 77-87; idem, "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *JNES* 22 (1963): 173-176; Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses in the Old Testament Prophets* (BO 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); Robert A. Oden, Jr., "The Place of Covenant in the Religion of Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Moshe Weinfeld, ברית, *TDOT* 2:253-354; Frank Moore Cross, "Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel," in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3-21; Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence, eds. *Treaty, Law, and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 243-266.



At the outset, I maintain, along with many others, that sexuality is largely a social construct and conceptions of sexuality in the ancient Near East were fundamentally different from those of current industrialized societies.<sup>278</sup> While the physiological manifestations of sexual behavior might appear relatively static, the cultural meanings ascribed to sexuality depend upon the socio-cultural matrix of the given place and time.<sup>279</sup> Since the concept of homosexuality as an identity has only existed since the late nineteenth century and predominantly applies only to western cultures,<sup>280</sup> applying the label “homosexual” to David and Jonathan or any other ancient pair is anachronistic. Rather, it seems that in many of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, sexuality was seen as a set of behaviors or preferences and related in terms of the social concept of gender. Sexuality was thus regulated “by a person’s place in the wider, stratified socio-sexual continuum of male and female.”<sup>281</sup> As we approach ancient texts, it is crucial to recognize the gap between contemporary and ancient conceptions of

---

<sup>278</sup> The major influence for conceptualizing sexuality as a social construct rather than an “essential” truth comes from Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, esp. vol. 1. Cf. discussions in Robert Padgug, “Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History,” in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (ed. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons with idem; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 14-34; David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, esp. 15-74; Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), esp. 1-18; Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 1-30; Anthony Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David: Manly Love in the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Sex* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 56-99.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*, 64.

<sup>280</sup> Charles Gilbert Chaddock is credited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* for introducing the term “homosexuality” into the English language in 1892 when translating Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia sexualis* (Stuttgart, 1887). The term originally appeared in print in 1869 in two German pamphlets by Karl Maria Kertbeny. See Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 43; Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 15-40; and Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*, 59.

<sup>281</sup> Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*, 76; cf. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 25; 30. For example, the passive partner in male-male intercourse might be regarded as “female.”

sexuality, yet at the same time realize the limitations of interpreters in divorcing themselves from their own socio-cultural context.<sup>282</sup>

There are five main texts that describe the relationship between David and Jonathan:

- 1) 1 Samuel 17:57-18:1-5: After David's defeat of Goliath, Jonathan makes an alliance with David and bestows upon him his weapons and royal garments, and David becomes part of Saul's military retinue.
- 2) 1 Samuel 19:1-7: When Saul first openly seeks to have David killed, Jonathan successfully intercedes on David's behalf and returns David into Saul's favor.
- 3) 1 Samuel 20: When Saul once again seeks David's life, David seeks Jonathan's aid and the two make another pact. Jonathan ascertains Saul's ill intentions toward David and attempts to intercede on David's behalf, but this time he is unsuccessful and Saul rages against Jonathan for siding with David. In an emotional scene, Jonathan confirms to David that Saul does intend to have him killed, and the two men bid each other farewell.
- 4) 1 Samuel 23:16-8: While David is a fugitive from Saul, Jonathan visits him to provide encouragement and the two once again make a pact, with Jonathan recognizing that David will be king after Saul.
- 5) 2 Samuel 1:26: After Jonathan is killed in battle along with Saul at the end of 1 Samuel (1 Sam 31), David composes a lament in honor of both men (1 Sam 1:17-26), at the end of which he specifically addresses his grief over the death of Jonathan.

---

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Zainab Bahrani, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 4.

Overall, Jonathan twice intercedes to his father on David's behalf when Saul wants to have David killed (1 Sam 19:1-7; 20), and Jonathan also helps David escape from Saul unharmed (1 Sam 20). Jonathan encourages David while he roams the Judean wilderness as a fugitive from Saul (1 Sam 23:16-18), and when Saul and Jonathan are killed in battle, David greatly laments their deaths (2 Sam 1). Three times David and Jonathan make a pact (1 Sam 18:3; 20:16; 23:18) even though this incurs Saul's wrath (1 Sam 20:30-31; 22:8). Moreover, Jonathan is described as "delighting in" David and several times as "loving" David. On three occasions, Jonathan is said to "love" David "as himself" (1 Sam 18: 1, 3; 20:17), and after Saul and Jonathan are killed in battle, David sings a lament for them in which he says that Jonathan's "love" was "better than the love of women" (2 Sam 1:26).

Views on the nature of David and Jonathan's relationship run the gamut, but most interpretations generally fall into one of three groups: those who view the affiliation between David and Jonathan through a political-theological lens;<sup>283</sup> those on the other

---

<sup>283</sup> See especially Martin A. Cohen, "The Role of the Shilonite Priesthood in the United Monarchy of Ancient Israel," *HUCA* 36 (1965): 83; J. A. Thompson, "The Significance of the Verb Love in the David-Jonathan Narratives in I Samuel," *VT* 24 (1974): 334-338; Peter Ackroyd, "The Verb Love—'āhēb in the David Jonathan Narratives—a Footnote," *VT* 25 (1975): 213-214; Gerhard Wallis, "אהב," *TDOT* 1:104-105, 109 (1977); Michael L. Barré, review of Thomas Horner, *Jonathan Loved David*, *CBQ* 41 (1979): 464; Jerzy Wozniak, "Drei verschiedene literarische Beschreibungen des Bundes zwischen Jonathan und David," *BZ* 27 (1983): 213-218; McCarter, *I and II Samuel*; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Loyalty and Love: The Language of Human Interconnections in the Hebrew Bible," in *Backgrounds for the Bible* (eds. M. P. O'Connor and D. N. Freedman; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 215-219; and "Love (OT)," *ABD* 4:375-381; Simon B. Parker, "The Hebrew Bible and Homosexuality," *QR* 11 (1991): 4-19; Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 51-60; idem, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative: Arrows of the Almighty*, 74-80; Ernst Jenni, "ahev to love," *TLOT*, 1:47, 48-49; (1997); Markus Zehnder, "Exegetische Beobachtungen zu den David-Jonathan-Geschichten," *Bib* 79 (1998): 153-179; idem, "Observations on the Relationship between David and Jonathan and the Debate Homosexuality," *Westminster Theological Journal* 69 (2007): 127-174; Shimon Bar Efrat, *The Jewish Study Bible* (eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 621; McKenzie, *King David*, 84-85; Jonathan Y. Rowe, *Sons or Lovers: an Interpretation of David and Jonathan's Friendship* (LBH/OTS 575; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).

side of the spectrum who argue for homoerotic and even sexual interpretation,<sup>284</sup> and yet still others who stand somewhere in between and argue that the presentation of David and Jonathan is rooted in the homosocial culture of ancient Israel.<sup>285</sup> The more recent scholarship on David and Jonathan has tended to move away from the binary opposition between a political versus erotic interpretations and instead has presented more nuanced views and asked different types of questions. For instance, Susan Ackerman has

---

<sup>284</sup> Among specialists, see Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), 171-172; David Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1980), 93; Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 148-151; Erhard Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. Douglas W. Stott; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, "Saul, David, und Jonatan—eine Dreiecksgeschichte? Ein Beitrag zum Thema 'Homosexualität im Ersten Testament,'" *Bibel und Kirche* 51 (1996): 15-22; translation, "Saul, David and Jonathan—The Story of a Triangle? A Contribution to the Issue of Homosexuality in the First Testament," in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings*, 22-36; Robert E. Goss, "Jonathan and David," in *Reader's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Studies* (ed. Timothy Murphy; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 318-319; Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*; Thomas Römer and Loyse Bonjour, *L'homosexualité dans le Proche-Orient ancien et la Bible* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2005); Saul Olyan, "Surpassing the Love of Women": Another Look at 2 Samuel 1:26 and the Relationship of David and Jonathan," orig. in *Authorizing Marriage* (ed. Mark D. Jordan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 7-16, repr. in *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011) 85-99.

Among non-specialists, see Thomas M. Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 114; Jody Hirsh, "In Search of Role Models," in *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish* (eds. Christie Balka and Andy Rose; Boston: Beacon, 1989), 83-91; Gary David Comstock, "Love, Power and Competition among Men in Hebrew Scripture: Jonathan as Unconventional Nurturer," in *Religion, Homosexuality, and Literature* (eds. Michael L. Stemmler and José Ignacio Cabezón; Las Colinas, Tex.: Monument, 1992), 3-29; Daniel A. Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality* (San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 1994), 103-104; Nancy Wilson, *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995). The earliest argument for a homoerotic relationship between David and Jonathan was written over a century ago by German physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld II, "David und der heilige Augustin, zwei Bisexuelle," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 2 (1900): 288-294;

<sup>285</sup> See especially David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 13-31, Numbers 11-12, 1 Kings 17-18)* (JSOT Supp. 7; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978); idem, *1 Samuel* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1998); David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row San Francisco, 1987), 204; David M. Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 75-86; Renita J. Weems, "Missing Jonathan: In a World of Power, Violence, and Ambition, a Friendship That Lasts," *The Other Side* 33 (1997): 50-55; Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, 53-56; idem, "Die Liebe von David und Jonatan als Frage der modernen Exegese," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 262; Yaron Peleg, "Love at First Sight? David, Jonathan, and the Biblical Politics of Gender," *JSOT* 30 (2005): 171-189; Anthony Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*.

examined potentially erotic imagery and language in the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic as well as the David and Jonathan material and connects the ambiguity surrounding the erotic in these narratives to anthropological concepts of liminality.<sup>286</sup> Also, utilizing reader-response criticism and queer theory, Anthony Heacock offers a queer reading of the David and Jonathan material and models David and Jonathan on contemporary male-male gay friendships though he denies that any overt sexual elements are present in the biblical text.<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, combining methodological approaches of anthropology with the literary criticism of Mikhail Bakhtin, Jonathan Y. Rowe has examined David and Jonathan's relationship in terms of ancient readers' expectations about family loyalty.<sup>288</sup>

I situate my own perspective on the David and Jonathan material within such recent discussions. While I do not regard the relationship between David and Jonathan depicted in the David Narrative as erotic, I think this material can be better understood when contextualized within, and juxtaposed against, the motif of sexuality present throughout the David Narrative. Specifically, a comparison of the material about David and Jonathan against the stories of David's politically strategic marriage alliances during his rise to power will shed some new light on understanding David and Jonathan's relationship. Looking at the portrayal David and Jonathan's interactions in light of David's connections with his wives Michal and Abigail is a helpful analogy as these episodes all focus on political allegiance to David and support of him as the future king

---

<sup>286</sup> Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 2005.

<sup>287</sup> Heacock, *Jonathan and David*, 2011, esp. 128-150.

<sup>288</sup> Rowe, *Sons or Lovers*, 2012.

of Israel. David Damrosch has argued for a “friendship-as-marriage motif” in the relationship between David and Jonathan, which he understands to be “simultaneously familial, political, and erotic.”<sup>289</sup> There are some common political elements between the depictions of David’s early marriage alliances and his alliance with Jonathan. Thus Damrosch is correct when he says that David and Jonathan’s relationship is “familial” and “political,” yet he is incorrect when he adds “erotic.” As discussed in chapter 3, sex is not central to any of the narratives of David’s early marriages but is only assumed by the marriage relationship and the production of children. Since there is no marriage between David and Jonathan, sex is therefore not assumed by the narrative. However, the David Narrative does seem to be making the case for the political alliance between David and Jonathan as legitimating David’s kingship, which parallels David’s marriage alliances, especially his marriage(s) to Michal, as justifications for his claim to the throne.

In approaching the material about David and Jonathan in the David Narrative, my primary question is how the literary portrayal of David and Jonathan’s relationship functions for the narrative of David’s rise to power. As the following textual analyses will show, a putative homoerotic/sexual relationship would not serve the overall purpose of the David Narrative. The episodes involving David and Jonathan are part of a larger group of narratives that seek to demonstrate the legitimacy of David’s rise to kingship over Israel and Judah and focuses in particular on the justification of David’s claim to the Israelite throne. The David Narrative shapes how Benjaminite kingship is replaced by Judahite kingship. Jonathan’s Benjaminite and specifically Saulide status helps to provide legitimacy for David the Judahite, and in this material inter-tribal alliance ultimately supersedes clan solidarity.

---

<sup>289</sup> Damrosch, *Narrative Covenant*, 203.

When taken together, the stories of David's rise to power present David's kingship over Israel as triply legitimate. First, Saul loses Yahweh's favor as a result of cultic infractions and becomes unsuitable for kingship over Israel (1 Sam 13:7-14; 15).<sup>290</sup> Secondly, after David's introduction to Saul's court, Saul's people, his courtiers, and even and especially two of his children, Michal and Jonathan, transfer their political support from Saul to David (1 Sam 18:1, 3, 16, 20, 22, 28; cf. 1 Sam 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26).<sup>291</sup> The shifted loyalties of Michal and Jonathan have tangible benefits for David in the narrative—David marries Michal (1 Sam 18:20-29; cf. 2 Sam 3:12-16), which provides him with some claim to Saul's throne,<sup>292</sup> and he makes an alliance with the king's son, which results in aid and protection when Saul is seeking his life. Finally, the text presents Jonathan as realizing and accepting that David will be king after his father (1 Sam 23:17), as well as allying his own house with David's (1 Sam 20:12-16), which explains why David later spares Jonathan's son Meribba'al (2 Sam 9). While presenting one's predecessor as unsuitable and making diplomatic marriage alliances are avenues to justifying kingship seen elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the portrayal of a willful alliance between David and King Saul's son seems to be an innovative argument for the legitimacy of David's kingship and his loyalty to the house of Saul.

---

<sup>290</sup> Andrew Knapp identifies this as a motif that he calls "the unworthy predecessor" in the royal apologies of the ancient Near East. He cites The Autobiography of Hattušili, The Rise of Nabonidus, and the Bisitun Inscription of Darius as other examples ("Royal Apology in the Ancient Near East [Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2012], 62-63. See also Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 159-168.

<sup>291</sup> Knapp, 61, also identifies popular acclaim as another "royal apology" motif seen also in The Autobiography of Hattušili (iv 26-29) and Solomon's accession (1 Kings 1:39-40).

<sup>292</sup> For further discussion of marriage alliances, see chapter 3.

#### **4.2. Jonathan and David before “David and Jonathan”: 1 Samuel 13-17**

Jonathan appears in two episodes before David is introduced to the narrative. Both episodes are in a military context, and Jonathan is presented as a brave and stalwart warrior. However, after David appears on the scene it is he and not Jonathan who is presented as having the ultimate military prowess (1 Sam 17; 18).<sup>293</sup> Potentially, these earlier references to Jonathan already imply a view toward David’s arrival in the narrative as both stories involving Jonathan serve to underscore Saul’s shortcomings.<sup>294</sup> In 1 Samuel 13:3, Jonathan strikes the Philistine prefect in Geba, and this action provokes the Philistines to war with Israel.<sup>295</sup> Saul summons all Israel to battle, but they are still vastly outnumbered, so some Israelites begin to scatter and hide (1 Sam 13:3-6). When Samuel is late for the pre-battle sacrifice, Saul presents the burnt offering, at which point Samuel arrives and admonishes Saul, informing him that he will not establish a dynasty because he has disobeyed Yahweh’s commands (1 Sam 13:8-14).<sup>296</sup> Benjaminite kingship will soon become Judean kingship.

In 1 Samuel 14:1-23 Jonathan and his armor-bearer secretly leave the Israelite battle camp for the Philistine garrison on the other side of Michmas Pass, and, following

---

<sup>293</sup> Jonathan’s only military involvement after meeting David is fighting and dying at the Battle of Mount Gilboa (1 Sam 31), though David’s lament over Saul and Jonathan also portrays him as an effective warrior (2 Sam 1:22-23). The alteration of Jonathan’s character in 1 Samuel 18-20; 23:16-18 suggests that these narratives stem from a different, and probably later, tradition.

<sup>294</sup> See Klein, *David versus Saul*, 137-138. Cf. Sara J. Milstein who aptly remarks, “Without Saul, there is no David story” (“Reworking Ancient Texts: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature,” [Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2010], 280).

<sup>295</sup> See my discussion of the verb  $\sqrt{b}$ ’š in section 6.2.

<sup>296</sup> McCarter argues this material was inserted into an older, long account of battle with Philistines (*I Samuel*, 230) and was preserved because it presents an unflattering portrait of Saul. However, Tsumura regards it as a literary whole (*First Book of Samuel*, 342). I tend to agree with McCarter’s view, but in either case the author/editor certainly uses these episodes to point to the direction he will be taking the story. Jonathan does not seem to be part of Saul material that has no reference to David.



Yahweh's sign, kill twenty Philistines, throwing the Philistine army into confusion and leading to victory for Israel.<sup>297</sup> However, in 1 Samuel 14:24-46 Saul rashly makes an oath that his troops will fast until the battle is won, but Jonathan, who does not know about the oath, eats a honeycomb. Later, when Saul does not receive an answer from the oracle, he swears he will kill whoever has broken the oath, which he discovers is Jonathan. However, the other warriors intercede for Jonathan and Saul spares him. Jonathan is certainly presented as a fierce warrior in these accounts, but Saul's leadership is problematic, which prepares the reader for the coming presentations of Saul. Moreover, Saul and Jonathan are depicted as out of sync in 1 Samuel 14:24-46, as Jonathan is not initially informed of his father's oath and then criticizes it. In the narrative to come, father and son will also be at odds over David (cf. 1 Sam 20; 23:16-18).

One question regarding Jonathan's attitude toward and interactions with David is whether or not we should assume in these narratives that primogeniture is in effect, especially since Saul is the first king of Israel. From what is known of the political history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, it seems that kings' sons were expected to succeed their fathers but still had to prove adequate leadership to remain in power.<sup>298</sup> The text of 1-2 Samuel largely reflects this situation. It seems that Saul plans for Jonathan to succeed him but understands that this is not guaranteed, which explains his fear of David's military success and popularity (1 Sam 18-20; 22-24; 26). In 1 Samuel

---

<sup>297</sup> The emphasis of "against the odds" battles is on Yahweh bringing about the victory. Cf. Gideon in Judges 7. Both episodes also contain divine panic from Yahweh (1 Sam 14:15; Judg 7:21-22).

<sup>298</sup> See Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23-28.

20:31, Saul warns Jonathan that as long as David lives, “neither you nor your kingship will be established” (*lō’ tikkôn ’attâ ûmalkûtekā*). While Saul is king, Jonathan is presented as having considerable prestige, which suggests that he is the candidate for succession: he is depicted as a brave warrior (1 Sam 13:3; 14:1-1-15), he honors David’s defeat over Goliath alongside Saul (1 Sam 17:58-18:1-5); he appears to be a close confidant of his father (1 Sam 19:1; 20:2), who values his counsel (1 Sam 19:4-6); and he has the authority to grant David leave (1 Sam 20:6, 28-29). From these examples, it seems that the David Narrative presents the son of Saul as having the adequate character and support to prove himself worthy of succeeding his father as king. Jonathan’s legitimacy, military success, and popularity make an even stronger case for the justification of David’s kingship, in that Saul’s son who would have ruled successfully nevertheless chooses David to take his place.

Samuel’s prophecy that Saul will not establish a dynasty in 1 Samuel 13:8-14 implies that this is Saul’s intention and, until this point, had divine sanction. After Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths, Saul’s son Ishba‘al does succeed him, even though it is only for two years (2 Sam 2:10).<sup>299</sup> Whereas Saul sees David as a threat who must be eliminated, Jonathan is presented as accepting, even asserting, that David will be the next king (1 Sam 23:17). Jonathan ensures his position and safety in the new regime by forging an alliance with David (1 Sam 18:3; 20:12-16; 23:18). Thus, the Jonathan material in 1 Samuel 13 and 14 functions both to highlight Saul’s inadequacy as king and Jonathan’s potential as an effective leader, which multiplies the impact of his political support of David.

---

<sup>299</sup> Two years seems to be the standard time for the previous king’s son to prove his leadership. See Fleming, *Legacy of Israel*, 23-28.

David is introduced into the narrative in 1 Sam 16, where, though the youngest of the sons of Jesse, he is anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 16:1-13). The young David is described as “ruddy-cheeked, bright-eyed, and handsome” (*wěhû’admônî ‘im-yěpēh ‘ēnayīm wětōb ro’î*)<sup>300</sup> and as tending his father’s flock (1 Sam 16:11-12). One tradition portrays David as becoming the lyre player in Saul’s court to soothe the evil spirit Yahweh has set upon him, and Saul is so pleased with David that he makes him his weapons-bearer (1 Sam 16:14-23). According to another tradition, however, David is only introduced to Saul after his defeat of the Philistine warrior Goliath (1 Sam 17:55-58).<sup>301</sup> Both of these traditions merge in the narrative of David’s incredible victory over Goliath—the young David, armed only with a sling-shot and his faith in Yahweh, defeats a fully-armed, experienced fighter.

There are two key themes throughout the narratives of David’s rise to power. The first is that Yahweh is “with” David, meaning that David has Yahweh’s favor and prospers in everything he does (1 Sam 16:18; 17:37; 18:14; 18:28; 2 Sam 5:10). A corresponding part of this motif is that Yahweh has departed from Saul (1 Sam 16:14; 20:13). Another important theme is that the people of Saul’s kingdom “love” David: Saul’s subjects, his courtiers, his children, and even Saul himself (1 Sam 16:21; 18:1, 3, 16, 20, 22, 28; 1 Sam 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26). This motif will be very important in understanding the material about David and Jonathan. Again, I posit that the narrative argument of Jonathan’s bestowal of his future kingship on David is a distinct angle on royal justification: the David Narrative not only presents the narrative argument that Saul

---

<sup>300</sup> Cf. 1 Samuel 17:42. Saul is similarly described in 1 Samuel 9:1 as “handsome young man” (*bāhūr wātōb*). As McCarter notes (*1 Samuel*, 276), “divine favor usually has physical symptoms.”

<sup>301</sup> For a bibliography of textual criticism of 1 Samuel 16-18, see section 3.2.

(as well as Ishba'al in 2 Samuel) are unworthy predecessors, but it also portrays David as the legitimate successor to Saulide kingship as mediated by Jonathan, who is depicted positively.

#### **4.3. David and Jonathan Meet: 1 Samuel 17:57-18:5**

This passage is part of the tradition which places David's entrance into Saul's retinue after his defeat of the Philistine warrior Goliath (1 Sam 17:1-56). It recounts David's initial meeting with the king and his son Jonathan as well as David's rise to the leadership of Saul's army. After David's incredible victory King Saul wishes to meet the young hero (1 Sam 17:57-18:5):

So when David returned after killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him into the presence of Saul, with the head of the Philistine still in his hand. Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, lad?" David said, "The son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." When he was finished speaking to Saul, the life of Jonathan was bound up with the life of David and Jonathan loved him as himself. Saul took him that day and would not let him return to the house of his father. Jonathan and David made a covenant because he loved him as himself. Then Jonathan took off the robe which was upon him and gave it to David, along with his gown as well as his sword, his bow, and his belt. David went out (in battle), succeeding in whatever mission Saul assigned him, and Saul put David in charge of the men of war; this pleased the army as well as Saul's court.

*ûkěšûb dāwid mēhakkôt 'et-happēlišī wayyiqqah 'otô 'abnēr wayēbi 'ēhû  
lipnē šā'ûl wērō 'š happēlišī bēyādō wayyo 'mer 'ēlāyw šā'ûl ben-mī 'attā  
hannā 'ar wayyo 'mer dāwid ben-'abdēkā yišay bēt hallahmī wayēhī  
kēkallotô lēdabbēr 'el-šā'ûl wēnepeš yēhônātān niqšērā bēnepeš dāwid  
wayye 'ēhābō yēhônātān kēnapšō wayyiqqāhēhû šā'ûl bayyôm hahû' wēlō'  
nētānō lāšûb bēt 'ābiyw wayyikrot yēhônātān wēdāwid bērit bē'ahābātō  
'otô kēnapšō wayyitpaššēt yēhônātān 'et-hammē'il 'āšer 'ālāyw  
wayyittēhēhû lēdāwid ūmaddāyw wē'ad-ḥarbō wē'ad-qaštō wē'ad-ḥāgōrō  
wayyēšē' dāwid bēkōl 'āšer yišlāhenû šā'ûl yaškīl wayēšimēhû šā'ûl 'al  
'anšē hammilḥāmā wayyiyṭab bē'ēnē kol-hā'ām wēgam bē'ēnē 'abdē šā'ûl*

Looking at 1 Samuel 18:1-4, it is understandable why a number of scholars have seen an erotic element in the interaction between David and Jonathan in these verses.

Jonathan's very being (*nepeš*) is described as "bound" or "attached" ( $\sqrt{qšr}$ ) to David. Moreover, Jonathan is twice said to "love" ( $\sqrt{h'b}$ ) David, specifically "as himself," or as is often translated, "as his own soul" (*kēnapšô*). Finally, Jonathan strips himself before David and gives the new hero his clothes and weapons. Without any cultural context, at first glance the language in 1 Samuel 18:4 as well as Jonathan's actions could seem suggestive of the type of intense psychological attachment and physical and emotional intimacy often associated with erotic relationships from the perspective of a modern, Western reader, and, indeed, this scene has been described as "love at first sight."<sup>302</sup> However, within the cultural milieu of ancient Israel these details point to a political alliance rather than an erotic liaison.

The verb I have translated "bound" (*niqšērâ*) is the Niphal stem of the root  $\sqrt{qšr}$ , that in the Qal usually means "tie down" but also "be in league with, conspire against."<sup>303</sup> The verb  $\sqrt{qšr}$  is also used with *nepeš* in Genesis 44:30-31, in which Judah pleads to Joseph for the release of Benjamin to their father Jacob, telling him that if Jacob sees that Benjamin is not with them when they return, he will assume that the boy is dead and he will also die "since [Jacob's] life is bound up with [Benjamin's] life" (*napšô qēšûrâ*

<sup>302</sup> Damrosch, *Narrative Covenant*, 203. Cf. Ackerman's discussion, *When Heroes Love*, 173-174.

<sup>303</sup> The only other occurrence of  $\sqrt{qšr}$  in the Niphal is in Nehemiah 3:38, which describes the wall of Jerusalem being rebuilt: "the wall was joined together to half its height" (*wattiqqāšēr kol-haḥômâ 'ad-ḥešyāh*). This usage of  $\sqrt{qšr}$  applies to an inanimate object rather than to human beings, though it does seem that the Niphal meaning is very close to the basic Qal meaning of "tie down." The secondary meaning of  $\sqrt{qšr}$  as "conspire" is attractive given the political context of the narrative and since this is, in a certain sense, what Jonathan will do when he protects David from Saul, choosing his allegiance to David over the loyalty he should show Saul, his father and his king (See Peter Ackroyd, "The Verb Love—*'āhēb* in the David Jonathan Narratives—a Footnote" *VT* 25 [1975]:213-214). However, against this interpretation is that  $\sqrt{qšr}$  meaning "conspire" is almost always accompanied by a preposition, usually *'al* "against," but here the preposition is *bē* "with." Though Saul certainly sees conspiracies against him (1 Sam 20:30; 22:8, 13), the David Narrative is at pains to show that David is actually *not* conspiring against Saul. Since  $\sqrt{qšr}$  as conspiracy is always negative, and the text presents Jonathan's loyalty to David as a justification for his legitimacy as king, I find it unlikely that the writer intended  $\sqrt{qšr}$  to have the meaning "conspire" here, even as word play or a double meaning.

*bēnapšō*). In this example,  $\sqrt{qšr}$  is in the Qal rather than the Niphal stem, but since it is a Qal passive participle, it has a similar semantic range. The relationship between Jacob and Benjamin is that of father and son and most certainly was not meant to be construed as erotic.<sup>304</sup> While Jonathan and David are not blood relatives, they form an alliance (*wayyikrot yēhônātān wēdāwid bērīt*) according to 1 Samuel 18:3, as well as in 1 Samuel 20:12-17 and 1 Sam 23:18. Ancient Near Eastern treaty language often employs familial terminology, such as “brother” for parity alliances and “father (in-law)” or “son (in-law)” for unequal treaty relationships. Since David and Jonathan are treaty partners, this explains the use of similar terminology to describe both the relationship between a father and son and between two adult men not related by blood.

Twice in this passage Jonathan is said to “love” ( $\sqrt{’hb}$ ) David “as himself” (*kēnapšō*), and this phrase also occurs in 1 Samuel 20:17. As shown in an influential article by William Moran, the term “love” has a specialized political connotation within biblical and ancient Near Eastern covenant relationships.<sup>305</sup> The focus of Moran’s argument is that the love terminology used in reference to the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy is distinct from modern understandings of love as deep psychological and emotional attachment. This love, he states, “is a love that can be commanded,”<sup>306</sup> as in Deuteronomy 6:5: “you shall love Yahweh your god with all your heart, with all your vitality, and with all your might”

---

<sup>304</sup> In support of seeing the relationship between David and Jonathan as a marriage, which would entail familial, political, and erotic nuances, Damrosch (*Narrative Covenant*, 204) adds that the language of Shechem’s attachment to Dinah in Genesis 34:3 has similar language. Genesis 34 uses  $\sqrt{dbq}$  instead of  $\sqrt{qšr}$  here; moreover, these are mitigating Shechem’s previous “violation” ( $\sqrt{’nh}$ ) of Dinah, and this has no parallel to the David and Jonathan material.

<sup>305</sup> William L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background,” 77-87.

<sup>306</sup> Moran, 78.

(wē'āhabtā 'ēt YHWH'ēlōhēkā bēkol-lēbābkā ūbēkol-nepšēkā ūbēkol-mē'ōdekā).<sup>307</sup>

Moran suggests that love language was part of the rhetoric of political treaties and alliances and cites numerous examples from ancient Near Eastern political documents spanning both the second and first millenniums BCE. For example, in an eighteenth-century BCE Mari letter to the king Yasmah-Addu the writer calls himself “the one who loves you,” (*rā'imka*) indicating his loyalty to the king.<sup>308</sup> This language is particularly prevalent among the fourteenth-century BCE Amarna letters to Pharaohs Amenhotep III and IV (Akhenaten) from their allies and vassals.<sup>309</sup> King Tushratta of Mittani writes of the alliance that existed between his father and Pharaoh saying (*EA* 17:24-28), “My father loved you, and you in turn loved my father. In keeping with this love, my father [g]ave you my sister” (*abūya irāmka u attā appūnama abūya tarāmšu u abūya kī rāmi aḥātī ana kāša [it]tanakku*).<sup>310</sup> Mutual “love” not only binds kings in parity alliances but also suzerains and their vassals. The vassal letters to Pharaoh, which make up the majority of the Amarna correspondence, speak of the vassals’ “love” (*rāmu*) for Pharaoh (*EA* 53:40-44, 114:59-69), their respective vassals’ “love” (*rāmu*) for them (*EA* 83:51; 138:47), and also the “love” (*rāmu*) Pharaoh, as suzerain, should bear to his vassals (*EA* 121:61-63;

---

<sup>307</sup> Regarding romantic love, it is usually its voluntary character that is stressed, the exact opposite of the type of “love” Moran discusses.

<sup>308</sup> For detailed analysis, see Georges Dossin, *Correspondence de Iasmah-Addu*, ARM V:76, 4, cited by Moran, “Ancient Near Eastern Background, 78.” For a more recent edition, see Jean-Marie Durand, *Les documents épistolaires du palais de Mari: présentés et traduits par Jean-Marie Durand*, vol. 1 (LAPO 16; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1997), 86-87. The transliteration and translation can also be found on the Archibab website: [www.archibab.fr](http://www.archibab.fr) (FM 9 33).

<sup>309</sup> See *EA* 17-30.

<sup>310</sup> For a detailed analysis, see J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (VAB 2; orig. pub. 1915, repr. Aalen: Otto Zeller, 1964), 132-133. For an easily accessible translation of this and other Amarna letters, see William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*. Nearly all of the Amarna letters I cite here are given as examples by Moran in “Ancient Near Eastern Background,” 79-80.

123:23). In each of these examples, “love” refers to political loyalty, which is incumbent on both the vassal and Pharaoh as a result of their treaty relationship.

Moran furthermore discusses several examples of politicized love language in the Hebrew Bible, all of which involve David. In 1 Kings 5:15 King Hiram of Tyre is called a “lover” (*’ōhēb*) of David, meaning that there was an alliance between the two kings, one that continues between Hiram and Solomon. In 2 Samuel 19:7 Joab admonishes David for mourning his rebel son Absalom’s death instead of rejoicing that the revolt has been quelled. He accuses David of “hating those who love [him] and loving those who hate [him]” (*lē’ahābā ’et-šōn ’ēkā wēlišnō’ ’et-’ōhābēkā*).<sup>311</sup> From Joab’s perspective, David reverses the proper order of things—he privileges his paternal grief for his son Absalom, even though Absalom broke the bonds of family and country by leading a revolt, over appreciating the victory of his army who fulfilled their covenant relationship, supporting and protecting their king in the face of a dire threat. Finally, 1 Samuel 18:16 states that “all Israel and Judah loved David because he went in and came out before them” (*kol-yiśrā’ēl wiyhūdā ’ōhēb ’et-dāwid kî-hû’ yôšē’ wābā’ lipnêhem*), which means that Israel and Judah give political support to David because he has led them successfully in battle.

Surprisingly, Moran only mentions the relationship between David and Jonathan in a footnote, where he compares the language that Jonathan “loved” (*’āhēb*) David “as himself” (*kēnapšō*) (1 Sam 18:1, 3 and 20: 17) to the Neo-Assyrian succession treaty of Esarhaddon (681-669 BCE), where the vassals of the Assyrian king are commanded to

---

<sup>311</sup> In *EA* 286:16-21, Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem accuses the Egyptian commissioner in Palestine of “loving” (*√r’m*), the *’apirū*, the outlaws of the region, but “hating” (*√z’r*) the *hazannū*, the native rulers who were Egypt’s loyal vassals; in other words, the commissioner is not following the covenant agreement he should uphold. For the full context and English translation, see Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 326-327.



“love” (*tar’amāni*) his successor Aššurbanipal “as themselves” (*kī napšātekunu*).<sup>312</sup> The striking parallel language, as well as the treaty/alliance contexts of both passages, suggests that Jonathan’s “love” for David should be understood along political lines. This understanding fits the theme, especially prevalent in 1 Samuel 18, of the transference of loyalty from Saul to David by the people of Saul’s kingdom, including his own children, which is described in terms of “love” (1 Sam 18:16, 20, 22). Furthermore, in Esarhaddon’s succession treaty it is the king’s subjects and vassals who pledge to “love” the future king “as themselves,” and it is Jonathan, who “loves David as himself” who will ultimately pledge to serve David when he is king (1 Sam 23:16-18).

Moran’s arguments about covenantal “love” in the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible have proven convincing among the majority of scholars over the last half century, even among some who find homoerotic nuances within the Jonathan and David material.<sup>313</sup> However, many of those interpreting these texts from a political perspective also recognize that the language used to describe David and Jonathan’s relationship has personal dimensions as well.<sup>314</sup> Indeed, if treaty relationships are based upon kinship, one should expect the “political” to be “personal,”<sup>315</sup> and the similarities between love

---

<sup>312</sup> Moran, “Ancient Near Eastern Background,” 82, n. 33, emphasis added. For detailed analysis of the succession treaty, see Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA II; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), 6: 266-68. See also Jacob Lauinger, “Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty at Tel Tayinat: Text and Commentary,” *JCS* 64 (2012): 87-123.

<sup>313</sup> See especially Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 170-172 and Olyan, “Surpassing the Love of Women,” 7-9.

<sup>314</sup> For examples, see Thompson, “The Significance of the Verb Love,” 336; Ackroyd, “The Verb Love,” 214; Sakenfeld, “Loyalty and Love,” 200; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 305.

<sup>315</sup> For extra-biblical precedence for this, see Liverani’s discussion of the Great Powers correspondence in the Amarna archive, where foreign kings act as if they have an actual interpersonal relationship with Pharaoh (“The Great Powers Club,” in *Amarna Diplomacy: the Beginnings of International Relations* [eds. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000], 18-19).

language for interpersonal relationships and covenant alliances allows for semantic overlap. The author of this passage takes advantage of this overlap to help strengthen the argument that David was always loyal to Saul's house.

It should be pointed out that the extra-biblical examples of the political nuances of love come primarily from diplomatic correspondence and treaties, not narratives. These categories had different functions and purposes as well as a different process of composition, and, moreover, they are attested at different time periods and different cultures. Therefore, we should not expect the David and Jonathan material to reflect exactly the language or relationships of these documents. As a narrative composition, the David Narrative can make relatively fluid use of the language and overarching concepts that are also present in political documents. In fact, in support of its justification for David's kingship over Israel, the David Narrative manipulates various meanings of the term "love" in the Jonathan material and elsewhere. Additionally, the reason that we can compare the David Narrative to ancient Near Eastern letters and treaties is that at some point they were all written down and preserved. However, within the narrative setting of the David and Jonathan material David and Jonathan make oral agreements—they are never depicted as writing down their pacts. Despite these distinctions, it seems clear that Jonathan's "love" for David reflects conceptions of political alliance within the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East.

Jonathan's gift of his robe and tunic, as well as his sword, bow, and belt, to David is also a significant component of the passage. The gift of weaponry fits a military context and connects to David's victory over Goliath. We should keep in mind that

---

See also Susan Ackerman's article "The Personal is Political," which discusses various meanings for the Hebrew term "love" (*ʾahb*).

David is still holding Goliath's severed head during his meeting with Jonathan (1 Sam 17:57)! Several scholars understand this verse as a symbolic transfer of power with Jonathan recognizing David as the future king by giving to him clothing items that signified him as the heir apparent.<sup>316</sup> This would be in keeping with Jonathan's recognition elsewhere that David, not Jonathan will become king after Saul (20:13-14; 23:17). However, this interpretation might go too far in the immediate context, which is entirely focused on military victory. The transfer of weapons seems a significant act, as weapons change hands three times in the David and Goliath pericope, including Jonathan's gift to David. Before David's contest with Goliath, Saul offers his armor to David but since David is not used to wearing armor he declines (1 Sam 17:38-39). After David defeats Goliath, he takes Goliath's armor for himself (1 Sam 18:54), and Goliath's sword is kept at the sanctuary at Nob (1 Sam 21:9-10). David's refusal of Saul's armor and receipt of Jonathan's weapons<sup>317</sup> and robe symbolically corresponds to the narrative's rejection of Saul as king and argument that David legitimately inherited the kingship from Jonathan.

The relative status between David and Jonathan is somewhat complicated in the narrative presentation. Sometimes Jonathan appears to be the social superior (1 Sam 19; 20:3), but in other instances David seems to be the senior treaty partner (1 Sam 20:12-16; 23:16-18). They are also presented as equals (2 Sam 1:26). These seeming contradictions result from the David Narrative's complex justification of David's succession to the Saulide throne via Jonathan. The narrative's argument is that Jonathan

---

<sup>316</sup> So Morgenstern, "David and Jonathan," 322; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 39, McCarter, *I Samuel*, 305.

<sup>317</sup> Rowe, *Sons or Lovers*, 94, suggests that David's rejection of Saul's suit of armor means that David is not subsequently obligated to the king, whereas he accepts Jonathan's gift.

voluntarily gives his allegiance to David, which therefore makes David a legitimate successor to the Saulide throne. Thus, Jonathan is presented as voluntarily allying himself with David with the recognition, sometimes overt, sometimes implicit, that David will become king, and this makes Jonathan appear to be the junior partner of the alliance. However, despite the various covenants between David and Jonathan and Jonathan's seeming acceptance of David becoming king in his place, Jonathan never actually abdicates his position within Saul's court. Therefore, within the setting of the narrative, Jonathan is still Saul's heir apparent and so David's social superior.

Thus, Jonathan's interaction with David in 1 Samuel 18:1, 3-4, when read in context (1 Sam 17:57-18:5), is not a scene of "love at first sight."<sup>318</sup> The entire passage depicts David being honored by Saul and Jonathan, king and son, and shows how David came to be part of Saul's entourage. Impressed by David's triumph over the Philistine, Jonathan astutely makes an alliance with the new hero as he begins to lead Saul's military. At this point in the narrative, David has both Saul and Jonathan's favor; yet, as we will see below, he will quickly earn the ire of Saul. Jonathan will act as arbitrator between the present and future king, but his function in the narrative is as a literary foil to his father Saul. Saul, David's unworthy predecessor, is jealous and paranoid about David and wants to kill him, but Jonathan always affirms David's innocence and protects him from Saul.

#### ***4.4. Jonathan Intercedes for David: 1 Samuel 19:1-7***

Shortly after making David his military commander, Saul begins to see David as a threat (1 Sam 18:8-9). Though Saul will occasionally repent of his hatred of David (1 Sam 19:7; 24:17-22; 26:21, 25), he seeks David's life from this point forward, at first

---

<sup>318</sup> *Contra* Damrosch, *Narrative Covenant*, 203.

covertly (1 Sam 18:17-29) or under the influence of an evil spirit (1 Sam 18:10-12; 19:9-10), and then openly (1 Sam 19-31). 1 Samuel 19:1-7 is the first time Saul overtly declares that he wants David dead.<sup>319</sup> Saul urges his servants and Jonathan to kill David, but, betraying his father, Jonathan tells David about Saul's command and warns him to be on his guard and remain in a secret hiding place (1 Sam 19:1-2). To explain the reason behind Jonathan's intervention to save David, the text states (1 Sam 19:1), "Jonathan, the son of Saul, took great delight in David" (*wiyhônātān ben-šā'ûl ḥāpēš bēdāwid mē'ōd*).

*Ḥāpēš* ( $\sqrt{hps}$ ) primarily refers to positive feelings of aspiration and is often translated "delight," "desire," or "take pleasure in." There are several biblical examples in which the term  $\sqrt{hps}$ , with a person as the object, is used with a clear sexual nuance,<sup>320</sup> and these examples have been utilized to support an eroticized and/or sexualized interpretation of the relationship between David and Jonathan.<sup>321</sup> In Genesis 34:19, after Shechem has raped Jacob's daughter Dinah he attempts to make reparations in order to marry her, not only to keep peace with Jacob's family but because he "delighted in the daughter of Jacob" (*ḥāpēš bēbat-ya'āqōb*), that is, he took sexual pleasure in Dinah. Deuteronomy 21:10-14 is a case law that specifies what provisions should be made if a male Israelite who has taken a female prisoner-of-war as a wife does not "delight in"

---

<sup>319</sup> The theme of Saul's jealousy of David begins in 1 Samuel 18:8-9 when, while celebrating an Israelite military victory, women sing of Saul killing "his thousands" but of David killing "his ten thousands." This is a standard poetic pair and does not necessarily mean that David killed more men than Saul (see discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 312, and Stanley Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*, Studies in [Ancient Oriental Civilization 32; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], 14-24). However, David Noel Freedman pointed out that it would have been offensive to Saul for David to have been given equal standing to the king (Review of Gevirtz, *JBL* 83 [1964]) 201-202; cf. McCarter, *ibid.*). Saul assesses that David's popular appeal will earn him the kingship, so now Saul sees David as a threat.

<sup>320</sup> For further discussion, see Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 176-177.

<sup>321</sup> See, for example, Damrosch, *Narrative Covenant*, 204-205; Schroer and Staubli, "Saul-David-Jonathan," 28; Susan Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 176-177.

(*'im-lō' ḥāpaštā bāh*) the woman after he has “gone into her and become her husband” (*tābō' 'ēlēhā ūbē'altāh*). Also, in Esther 2:14, the concubines of King Ahasuerus may only see the king again after the initial sexual encounter if Ahasuerus “delighted in her” (*ḥāpēš bāh*)<sup>322</sup> and summons her by name; in other words, if the king enjoyed the woman sexually.

However, the book of Samuel also contains two examples of  $\sqrt{hpš}$  where the meaning is clearly political,<sup>323</sup> as well as another example which has political and theological significance. In the wake of his son Absalom’s revolt, David appoints Amasa, who had served as Absalom’s military commander, as head of his army (2 Sam 19:14). This reconciliatory gesture, however, displaces David’s long-time general Joab, and while enroute to quell yet another revolt, Joab stabs Amasa in view of the entire military force (2 Sam 20:9-10). As Amasa lies dying on the side of the road, the soldiers hesitate at the gory scene. To keep the soldiers moving forward, one of Joab’s men stands by Amasa’s body and calls out in 2 Samuel 20:11 that “whoever ‘delights’ in Joab and whoever is for David, follow Joab!” (*mī 'āšer ḥāpēš bēyō'āb ūmī 'āšer-lēdāwid 'ahărê yō'āb*). In this case,  $\sqrt{hpš}$  denotes political, and specifically military, support. Joab is attempting to resume his control over David’s military force, and, to encourage political support in the wake of an assassination, he asserts that loyalty to him is essentially equivalent to following the king. While this statement is an exhortation, it is not necessarily a command: there is an element of choice for the fighting men, and in fact, Joab’s call for support does not immediately receive a positive response. The army

---

<sup>322</sup> This phrase is not in the Septuagint.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Anthony Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*, 8.

initially stands still at the spot where Amasa's body lies and only follows Joab after the body is moved and covered from view (2 Sam 20:12).

The term  $\sqrt{hp\dot{s}}$  also has a political nuance in 1 Samuel 18:22, where King Saul is said to “delight in” ( $h\ddot{a}p\ddot{e}s$ ) David. Saul has offered his daughter Michal to David in marriage with the ulterior motive that David will die in the process of securing his named bride price of a hundred Philistine foreskins. To ensure that David will want to accept the marriage offer, Saul commands his servants to tell David privately that “the king ‘delights’ in you, and all his servants love you” ( $h\ddot{a}p\ddot{e}s\ b\check{e}k\ddot{a}\ hammelek\ w\check{e}kol\text{'}\ \ddot{a}b\ddot{a}d\ddot{a}w\ \ddot{a}h\ddot{e}b\ddot{u}k\ddot{a}$ ). Here the “delight” ( $h\ddot{a}p\ddot{e}s$ ) Saul is said to feel toward David is in parallel with the “love” ( $\ddot{a}h\ddot{e}b$ ) that Saul's courtiers have for David. In light of Moran's argument about the meaning of the term “love” in covenant language, it is clear that the “love” which Saul's courtiers bear David denotes political support. Thus, in this case,  $\sqrt{hp\dot{s}}$  should also be understood in a political sense, indicating Saul's royal “favor” or “preference.” Though disingenuous, Saul intends to entice David into marriage negotiations by telling him that he has the king's favor as well as the political backing of the court.

Beyond royal favor, the term  $\sqrt{hp\dot{s}}$  can also indicate divine support. The term is often used in the Hebrew Bible to indicate what is pleasing to God.<sup>324</sup> Yahweh is said to  $\sqrt{hp\dot{s}}$  “delight” in human beings, either individually or corporately (Num 14:8, 2 Sam 22:20/Ps 18:20; 1 Kgs 10:9; Ps 16:3, 22:9, 41:12), and one example, 2 Samuel 15:25-26, also involves David. When David flees Jerusalem during Absalom's revolt, he sends the Ark of Yahweh back to the city, saying, “If I find favor ( $h\ddot{e}n$ ) with Yahweh, he will bring

---

<sup>324</sup> 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11, 13:17, 55:11, 56:4, 62:4, 65:12; Jeremiah 9:23; Ezekiel 18:23, 32, 33:11; Hosea 6:6; Micah 7:18; Malachi 1:10, 2:17; Psalms 40:7, 51:8, 18, 21, 115:3, 135:6; Job 22:3; Qohelet 5:3.

me back and let me see it [the Ark] and its abode. But if he should say, ‘I do not ‘delight’ ( $\sqrt{hps}$ ) in you,’ let him do with me what seems good to him” (*’im-’emšā’ ḥēn bē’ēnē YHWH wehššibnî wēhir’anî ’otô wē’et-nāwēhû wē’im kōh yo ’mar lō’ ḥāpaštî bāk hīnēnî ya’āseh-lî ka’āšer tōb bē’ēnāyw*). Here  $\sqrt{hps}$  is parallel to *ḥēn*, the usual term indicating “favor.” In this passage,  $\sqrt{hps}$  directly connects to the favor of Yahweh, David’s divine sovereign. David understands that he can only be reinstated as king if he has Yahweh’s support. Similarly, in 2 Chronicles 9:8 when the queen of Sheba makes a diplomatic visit to King Solomon, she exclaims, “blessed be Yahweh your God who has ‘delighted’ ( $\sqrt{hps}$ ) in you, setting you upon his throne to be king for Yahweh your God” (*yēhî YHWH ’ēlōhēkā bārūk ’āšer ḥāpēš bēkā lētittēkā ’al-kis’ô lēmelek laYHWH ’ēlōhēkā*). Human kingship depends upon divine patronage—the national god(s) must support the king sitting upon the throne, which in these two Hebrew examples is rendered as  $\sqrt{hps}$ .

The Akkadian verb *ḥašāḥu* can sometimes have a similar sense to the Hebrew term  $\sqrt{hps}$ . Though Akkadian *ḥašāḥu* can indicate “need,” which is not part of the semantic range of Hebrew  $\sqrt{hps}$ , *ḥašāḥu* is attested more often as signifying “desire,” or “like,”<sup>325</sup> similar to  $\sqrt{hps}$ . According to two examples, *ḥašāḥu* can also indicate political support for a king. In an autobiographical inscription commemorating the return of the statue of the god Marduk to Babylon, the Neo-Assyrian king Aššurbanipal (669-627 BCE) recounts the achievements of his youth and his designation as crown-prince. When describing his installation as king of Assyria, he says, “the nobles and officials desired (*ḥašāḥu*) my rule, loved my exercise of kingship” (*rūbī<sup>LÚ</sup> šūt rēšī bēlūtī iḥšuḥū irāmū*

---

<sup>325</sup> For references, see *CAD*, H, 134-136.



*epēš šarrūtiya*).<sup>326</sup> Here *ḥašāḥu* is parallel to *rāmu* “love,” similar to 1 Samuel 18:22 in which  $\sqrt{hps}$  is parallel to  $\sqrt{hb}$ . In this royal inscription, Aššurbanipal indicates that he had the political backing of his most powerful nobles at the time he was designated as successor to his father Esarhaddon. Aššurbanipal asserts that the members of the Assyrian nobility support his claim to the throne over any of his brothers’ (cf. i, 6). In 2 Samuel 20, the fighting men of Judah must also demonstrate where their loyalty lies, following Joab if they “delight” in him and are “for David.” Political support in these contexts is presented not as commanded but freely given. There is also an example of the Akkadian verb *ḥašāḥu* as indicative of divine preference for a king. On a building inscription, the Middle-Assyrian king Aššur-reša-iši (1133-1116 BCE) is described as favored by the gods: “Aššur-reša-iši, the governor of Bêl, the priest of Aššur, whom Anu, Bêl and Ea, the great gods chose (*ḥašāḥu*), and, so he should rule the land of Assyria, proclaimed his dominion” (*Aššurrešiši šak[ni] <sup>D</sup>Bêl šangû <sup>D</sup>Aššur ša <sup>D</sup>Anu <sup>D</sup>Bêl u <sup>D</sup>Ea ilāni rabûti [...] kī iḥṣuḥūšuma ana šutēšur<sup>KUR</sup> Aššur bēlušu ibbû*).<sup>327</sup> Aššur-reša-iši asserts that he is the recipient of divine favor and that his kingship has divine sanction. A similar notion is behind David’s statement in 2 Samuel 15:25-26 that he will only retain his position as king if he has Yahweh’s favor.

<sup>326</sup> This inscription, known as L<sup>4</sup>, is made up of the fragments K 3050 and K 2694 and is housed in the British Museum. The primary edition is Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), 176. Earlier editions include: Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh’s* (VAB 7) (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916), 260: ii, 12; Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1927), 380. Also, see the recent re-interpretations by Alasdair Livingstone, “Ashurbanipal: Literate or Not?” *ZA* (2007): 98-118, esp. 100ff.; and Jeanette C. Fincke, “The Babylonian Texts of Nineveh,” *Afo* 50 (2003): 122ff.

<sup>327</sup> For detailed analysis, see A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)*, vol. 1. of *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 309ff. An earlier edition can be found in E. A. Wallis Budge and L. W. King, *Annals of the Kings of Assyria: The Cuneiform Texts with Translations, Transliterations, etc., from the Original Documents in the British Museum*, vol. 1 (London: British Museum, 1902), 17-18, ll. 1-3.

Taken together, the examples from 1-2 Samuel, as well as the Middle and Neo-Assyrian parallels, suggest that Jonathan's "delight" in David in 1 Samuel 19:1 should be understood primarily as political support rather than erotic desire. In light of Moran's argument about the verb "love" ( $\sqrt{hb}$ ) discussed in the previous section it seems possible that  $\sqrt{hps}$  could also have a specialized political nuance within a wider semantic range to describe the interaction between individuals in a treaty relationship. A major difference, however, is that within covenantal rhetoric,  $\sqrt{hb}$  is commanded and demanded;  $\sqrt{hps}$ , on the other hand, seems to denote voluntary preference of a person within a political alliance. Thus,  $\sqrt{hps}$  "delight" indicates a choice of political alignment that can go either way, from the superior party downward, denoting favor or preferment, or from the subordinate member upward, signifying choice or election. In the examples cited above,  $\sqrt{hps}$  in a political context does not seem to indicate a relationship between equals. However, no matter which direction the  $\sqrt{hps}$  flows, the element of choice is key. Considering the ambiguity of David and Jonathan's relationship at this point—Jonathan seems to give David his allegiance in 1 Samuel 18:1-4, yet remains Saul's heir apparent—it is difficult to decide which is the case in the usage of  $\sqrt{hps}$  in 1 Samuel 19:1. Perhaps the use of  $\sqrt{hps}$  "delight" intentionally hints at this ambiguity: within the immediate context of 1 Samuel 19 Jonathan is David's social and political superior but ultimately within the David Narrative Jonathan recognizes David as the legitimate successor to kingship over Israel.

Thus a better translation of the phrase in 1 Samuel 19:1 might be: "Jonathan, the son of Saul, greatly favored David." In 1 Samuel 19 David is clearly out of favor with Saul, the king, since Saul wants David killed. However, Jonathan, the son of the king,

does favor David, and he demonstrates his political partiality by interceding on David's behalf to his father. Not only does Jonathan convince Saul not to kill David, but he also brings David back into Saul's good graces, at least for a time.<sup>328</sup>

Jonathan formulates a plan that he will speak to Saul about David in a field near David's hiding spot and then tell David what transpires (1 Sam 19:2-3). He follows through with his strategy and in 1 Samuel 19:4 "spoke well of David to his father Saul" (*wayēdabbēr yēhônātān bēdāwid tōb 'el-šā'ûl 'ābîw*), asserting of David that "his deeds have been very good (*tōb*) for you" (*ma 'āšāyw tōb-lēkā mē'ōd*). The term *tōb* "good," though having a wide usage, appears in covenantal terminology found in biblical and ancient Near Eastern materials with the political meaning of friendship through treaty alliance.<sup>329</sup> Thus Jonathan is telling Saul that David has acted in accordance with his role as the king's vassal; i.e., David has exhibited fidelity toward Saul.<sup>330</sup> Jonathan also reminds Saul of David's great feat in defeating the Philistine champion and how Saul rejoiced in the victory (1 Sam 19:5). Jonathan also brings to Saul's attention the problem of kings incurring bloodguilt, saying in 1 Samuel 19:5, "let not the king sin against his servant David, for he has not sinned against you" (*'al-yehēṭā 'hammeklek bē'abdô bēdāwid kî lô' ḥāṭā' lāk*). The references to Saul as "king" and to David as Saul's "servant" again emphasize the political relationship between the two men. Jonathan then questions Saul more pointedly, asking rhetorically, "why would you sin against innocent blood, to kill

---

<sup>328</sup> In 1 Samuel 19:7 Jonathan brings David back into Saul's "presence" (*wayēhî lēpānāw*).

<sup>329</sup> See William L. Moran, "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *JNES* 22 (1963): 173-176; Abraham Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," *BAR* 28 (1965): 63-64; Delbert R. Hillers, "A Note on Some Treaty Terminology in the Old Testament," *BASOR* 176 (1964): 46-47; and the discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 322.

<sup>330</sup> See discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 322.

David without cause?” (*lāmmâ teḥēṭā’ bēdām nāqî lēhāmît ’et-dāwīd ḥinnām*).<sup>331</sup> Saul heeds Jonathan’s words and decides that David will not be killed (1 Sam 19:6). Jonathan tells David what transpires and brings David to Saul, whereupon David “was in his (Saul’s) presence as before” (*wayēhî lēpānāw kē’etmôl šilšôm*), meaning that David is once again a welcome member of Saul’s retinue (1 Sam 19:7).

In 1 Samuel 19:1-7 Jonathan uses his position as son of the king to prevent David from being killed. Just as Jonathan argues that David has been a loyal vassal (doing *tôb*) to Saul, so Jonathan also does *tôb* for David, acting as a loyal covenant partner (1 Sam 19:4). Rather than read *√hpš* “delight” with an erotic connotation, a political interpretation is more compelling. In this context, Jonathan favors David, intercedes for him, warns him, and reincorporates him into Saul’s court, actions that are all political, not erotic.

#### **4.5. Jonathan Helps David Escape: 1 Samuel 20**

Saul’s good will toward David reverses very quickly, and he again tries to kill him in 1 Samuel 19:9-10 and 19:11-17. In the latter episode, David’s wife, Saul’s daughter Michal, helps David escape the clutches of the king (see section 3.2.2). David seeks protection from Samuel at Ramah and then Naioth (1 Sam 19:18-24), but then flees from there to seek out Jonathan (1 Sam 20:1).<sup>332</sup> In contrast to the previous interaction

---

<sup>331</sup> Examples of the problem of blood-guilt for kings can also be found in Abigail’s speech to David in 1 Samuel 25 and the reason given in Chronicles that Solomon, not David, builds the temple (1 Chron 22:8). This question is meant to be understood as a command in Hebrew idiom, i.e. “don’t sin against innocent blood” (cf. 1 Samuel 19:17). See also GKC 150e and Driver, *Hebrew Text*, 123-124.

<sup>332</sup> It makes very little sense for David to escape Saul and then return, which is an argument for seeing Jonathan and Michal as parallel traditions. However, McCarter sees David’s audiences with Samuel, Jonathan, and Ahimelech as a unit which shows that David receives support from the leading figures in Saul’s kingdom (*1 Samuel*, 329-330). Cf. Grønbaeck, *Aufstieg Davids*, 114, 264, who notes the beginning *wyb’* in each passage.

between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 19:1-7, in this episode it is David who brings the news of Saul's ill intentions to an unsuspecting Jonathan. Jonathan responds incredulously at first (1 Sam 20:2), protesting "God forbid! You shall not die! My father does not do anything great or small without revealing it to me. Why would my father conceal such a thing from me? This cannot be!" (*ḥālîlâ lō' tāmût hinnēh lō'-ya'āseh 'ābî dābār gādôl 'ô dābār qātôn wēlō' yigleh 'et 'oznî ûmaddûa' yastîr 'ābî mimmennî 'et-haddābār hazzeh 'ên zō't*). David argues in 1 Samuel 20:3 that since Saul knows David "has found favor in Jonathan's eyes" (*māṣātî ḥēn bē'ênêkā*), he might think Jonathan would warn David, which is precisely what happens in 1 Samuel 19:1-7.<sup>333</sup> According to David, it seems that Jonathan is his superior, but in a few verses Jonathan and David will make another pact in which it is clear that Jonathan follows David. David goes on to swear by Yahweh that he speaks the truth, and Jonathan, now convinced, agrees to act for him (1 Sam 20:3-4).

David is also the one who comes up with the plan in this passage, as opposed to Jonathan who takes charge in 1 Samuel 19:1-7.<sup>334</sup> David intends to hide out and not attend the feast of the New Moon, which is to begin the following day. Should Saul miss him, David asks Jonathan to lie to his father and tell Saul that he has given permission for David to return to Bethlehem for a seasonal sacrifice with his clan (1 Sam 20:5-6). David proposes that Jonathan will be able to discern Saul's true intentions for David from this

---

<sup>333</sup> MT has *pn y'šb* "lest Jonathan be grieved" but LXX has "lest he take counsel" reflects *pn yw's*, which makes more sense, especially in light of 1 Samuel 19:1-7. It can be explained textually by a loss of the *waw* which a later scribe tried to correct by adding a final *bet*. Saul certainly does not spare Jonathan's feelings later in the chapter. Moreover, LXX<sup>L</sup>, OL, and Syr all render the sense of Saul being worried that Jonathan will tell David of his plans. See McCarter, *I Samuel*, 335.

<sup>334</sup> Of all of the episodes about David and Jonathan, this is the one where David is most active (though Jonathan still does most of the action). In fact, this is the only episode in which David and Jonathan interact that David speaks at all.

false information: if Saul acquiesces, David is safe; if he becomes very angry, this means Saul intends to harm David (1 Sam 20:7). Presumably, Saul would be angry about David's absence because David would be outside of Saul's physical proximity and also protected by his Bethlehemite clan.

David then requests in 1 Samuel 20:8 that Jonathan “deal loyally” (*‘āsītā ḥesed*) with him, referencing a prior pledge between the two men. Specifically, David says that it is Jonathan who “brought” David into a “pact of Yahweh” with him (*kī bibrīt YHWH ḥēbē’tā ’et-‘abdēkā*).<sup>335</sup> In the ancient Near East, treaties were understood to have divine witnesses, and curses regularly accompany treaties describing the horrors that will befall the person who breaks the terms of the treaty.<sup>336</sup> Thus David appeals to the sacred and binding character of their alliance to implore Jonathan to be faithful to their pact even though Jonathan owes Saul dual fidelity as his father and king. Jonathan promises that he will tell David what he discerns about Saul (1 Sam 20:9) and devises a way to communicate to David without anyone's knowledge (1 Sam 20:18-22): he will go near the place where David is hiding as if for target practice, along with a servant to retrieve the arrows. If he shoots the arrow on the near side of the servant, this will be the signal to David that he is safe, but if he shoots on the far side of David, it means that David should escape because Saul does intend to kill him.

In the midst of David and Jonathan's dialogue about their plan to discover Saul's intentions, a section describing a new pact between the two men appears, interrupting the

---

<sup>335</sup> The phrase *bērīt YHWH* also occurs in Deuteronomy 4:23, 10:8, 29:11, 24; Joshua 23:16; 1 Kings 8:21 and 2 Chronicles 6:11.

<sup>336</sup> For examples, see the Old Aramaic Sefire Stela and the Neo-Assyrian Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon.

flow of the narrative (20:12-17).<sup>337</sup> In the other two occurrences of alliances between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3; 23:18), the only information given is that the two heroes make a pact ( $\sqrt{krt} \text{ } b\check{e}r\hat{it}$ ); however, this episode includes specific information about the terms of their agreement. Jonathan vows to sound out Saul's intentions and report the verdict to David (20:12-13). Moreover, he blesses David with the words "may Yahweh be with you as he was with my father" ( $wiyh\hat{i} \text{ } YHWH \text{ } 'imm\bar{a}k \text{ } ka' \check{a}šer \text{ } h\bar{a}y\bar{a}h \text{ } 'im- ' \bar{a}b\hat{i}$ ). The Qal perfect form of  $\sqrt{hyh}$  "be" rendered in the past tense could suggest that by this point Jonathan realizes that Yahweh has abandoned Saul (cf. 1 Sam 13:13-14; 15:23, 27-29) and chosen David to be ruler of Israel (1 Sam 20:13).<sup>338</sup> Appropriately, 1 Samuel 20 is the first episode in which Jonathan actively chooses his support of David over and against his loyalty to Saul. Jonathan continues with the terms of the pact: that David shall not only "deal loyally" ( $\sqrt{sh} \text{ } h\check{e}sed$ ) with Jonathan while he is alive but if he dies, David must remain "loyal" ( $h\check{e}sed$ ) to Jonathan's house forever (1 Sam 20:14-16).<sup>339</sup>

After Jonathan states the terms of the agreement in 1 Samuel 20:17 he again swears to David "out of his love for him, for he loved him as he loved himself ( $b\check{e}'ah\check{a}b\bar{a}t\bar{o} \text{ } 'ot\bar{o} \text{ } k\bar{i}- 'ah\check{a}bat \text{ } napš\bar{o} \text{ } ' \check{a}h\bar{e}b\bar{o}$ ).<sup>340</sup> While not exactly the same construction,

---

<sup>337</sup> 1 Samuel 20 12-17 are seen as a secondary insertion by McCarter, *I Samuel*, 342, 344; Veijola, *Ewige Dynastie*, 81-87; Klein, *I Samuel*, 205.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 342. It also reinforces the theological motif of Yahweh being "with" David (1 Sam 16:18; 17:37; 18:14; 18:28; 2 Sam 5:10) in his ascent to kingship.

<sup>339</sup> Jonathan makes sure he protects his own progeny from repercussions from David if there is indeed a rupture with Saul. This explains the "loyalty" ( $h\check{e}sed$ ) David will show Jonathan's son Meribba'al in 2 Sam 9. David restores to Meribbaal all of the land which belonged to Saul and requires that Meribba'al always dine at the king's table (2 Sam 9:7-10; 13). As Jonathan's son, Meribbaal and his line will be the only descendents of Saul to survive.

<sup>340</sup> Reading with LXX. MT has *wayyosep yēhōnātān lēhašbā' 'et-dāwīd* "Jonathan again made David swear," but David has not yet sworn anything. Cf. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 337; Klein, *I Samuel*, 203. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 169, and Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 507, follow the MT.

this phrase is analogous to the statements which accompany David and Jonathan's pact in 1 Samuel 18:1 and 3, where Jonathan is said to "love David as himself." Again, this love is a political love, seen here in a very specific description of a pledge, not an erotic love.

Jonathan attends the feast of the new moon and follows David's plan (1 Sam 20:25-29). When Jonathan tells Saul he has given David permission to go to a clan sacrifice in Bethlehem, Saul becomes enraged at Jonathan (1 Sam 20:30) and calls him the "son of a perversely rebellious woman" (*ben na'arat hammardût*).<sup>341</sup> This insult is not necessarily directed at Jonathan's mother but at Jonathan himself. *Ben* "son of" can also mean "member" or "class of," equating Jonathan with a rebellious woman who forsakes those to whom she should be loyal.<sup>342</sup> With this in mind, Saul's insult not only attacks Jonathan's loyalty to his father and his kingdom but further humiliates Jonathan by equating him with a woman, effectively emasculating him. It is possible that Saul does mean to indicate Jonathan's mother in this exclamation, as he will specifically mention her in his next statement; however, the insult is still meant toward Jonathan (analogous to "son of a whore," "son of a bitch" in English). Saul continues, asking rhetorically, "do I not know that you are allied with the son of Jesse, to your shame and the shame of your mother's nakedness?" (*hālō' yāda 'tī kī-ḥōbēr*<sup>343</sup> 'attā lēben-yišay

---

<sup>341</sup> Or perhaps, "son of a rebellious wench." The MT has "son of a perverse woman of rebelliousness" (*ben na'āwat hammardût*), understanding *na'āwat* as a Niphal participle, feminine singular of √'wh "bend," but commentators often emend to *na'arat* "young woman, servant girl." To support this, LXX and 4QSam<sup>b</sup> have the plural *n'rwt* "young women." Whatever the reading and the precise meaning of this phrase, the general pejorative meaning seems clear.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 343; Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 520. But see Klein, *I Samuel*, 209, and Auld, *I and II Samuel*, 244, who maintain that the insult is directed at Jonathan's mother.

<sup>343</sup> Reading *ḥōbēr* with LXX. MT has *bōḥēr* "choose," which, as Driver points out, usually takes the preposition *bē*, not *lē* as here, and is probably a result of transposition. As a side note, the two instances of David being said to "conspire" or "be in league" with Jonathan result in textual confusion (1 Sam 20:3 and 20:30).



*lēboštēkā ūlēbōšet* ‘*erwat* ‘*immekā*). Here, Saul tells Jonathan that he has dishonored his mother’s genitals, his point of entry into the world.<sup>344</sup> In effect, Saul means that it would be better if Jonathan had never been born. Again, Saul associates Jonathan with the feminine—his “shame” is equal to the “shame of his mother’s nakedness.”

Erotic overtones are definitely present in Saul’s verbal attack on Jonathan. “Nakedness” (‘*erwā*) certainly, and probably specifically, includes genitalia, and the phrase “uncovering the nakedness” (√*glh* ‘*erwā*) occurs several times in the Hebrew Bible as a euphemistic reference to sexual intercourse.<sup>345</sup> Given the emasculating and erotic overtones of Saul’s insult of Jonathan, does it then logically follow that Saul is suggesting there is an erotic or sexual component to Jonathan and David’s relationship?<sup>346</sup> While there could be sexual overtones to Saul’s insults, it would be a non-sequitur to suggest any explicit sexual connection between Jonathan and David unless the author is being extremely subtle. At best, there may be an insinuation, and yet with nothing else in the narrative for support it is a weak suggestion. Insults are often hurled at one’s gender or sexuality even when there is no connection to the situation. Thus, Saul’s feminine comparisons for Jonathan could indicate that he thinks Jonathan is not performing his “manly” duties of defending his kingship against an imminent threat. Saul’s anger at Jonathan stems from his (understandable) viewpoint that Jonathan has betrayed his father and king by helping David. Indeed, Saul’s verbal assault on Jonathan

---

<sup>344</sup> See McCarter, *I Samuel*, 343.

<sup>345</sup> Leviticus 18:7-19; 20:17-21; Ezekiel 22.10; cf. Genesis 9:21-22.

<sup>346</sup> As argued particularly by Schroer and Staubli, “David-Saul-Jonathan,” 29-30, and to some extent by Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 187-188.

is focused on the political future of Saulide kingship, not the sexual behavior of his son, as the following verse makes clear.

In 1 Samuel 20:31 Saul asserts that as long as David lives, Jonathan will not be able to take over as king (“neither you nor your kingship will be established” *lō’ tikkôn ’attâ ûmalkûtekā*) and then commands Jonathan to have David brought to Saul, so that he can be put to death (1 Sam 20:31). Jonathan attempts to intercede for David as he does in 1 Samuel 19:1-7, attempting to make Saul admit David’s innocence (1 Sam 20:32). However, this time Jonathan’s reasoning does not have the effect he hopes. Instead, Saul throws his spear at Jonathan, trying to strike him. Realizing that Saul does indeed plan to kill David, Jonathan leaves the feast furious at his father for humiliating him (1 Sam 20:33-34).<sup>347</sup>

The next morning Jonathan proceeds with his plan of signaling to David during what appears to be target practice, and he shoots his arrow on the far side of his servant to communicate that Saul plans to harm David (1 Sam 20:35-39). However, in 1 Samuel 20:40-42 David then rises from his hiding place to say good-bye to Jonathan.<sup>348</sup> David “fell on his face and did obeisance three times” (*wayyipol lē’appâw ’aršâ wayyištahû šālōš pē’āmîm*) to Jonathan and the two men “kissed each other and wept over each other” (*wayyiššēqû ’iš ’et-rē’ēhû wayyibkû ’iš ’et-rē’ēhû*), before Jonathan tells David to go in peace, reminding him of the divine covenant that exists between them and their

---

<sup>347</sup> David and Jonathan are both targets of Saul’s spear (David in two instances, 1 Sam 18:10-12 and 1 Sam 19:9-10; Jonathan only here) and both elude Saul’s attack. Such a narrative coincidence seems like a deliberate literary connection between the two allies. Moreover, in this episode Jonathan utilizes arrows (essentially smaller, quicker versions of spears) in a non-lethal manner to protect David.

<sup>348</sup> This effectively makes Jonathan’s plan unnecessary, since Jonathan could have given him the information in person. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 343 suggests that this is another insertion by same person who wrote 1 Sam 20:11-17, 23.

descendants (1 Sam 20:42). Men kissing would not have had the erotic connotations in the ancient Near East that it does in some modern cultures, such as the United States.<sup>349</sup> There are other biblical examples of kissing as a sign of farewell in relationships that are clearly not erotic (David and Barzillai in 2 Sam 19:40; Elisha and his parents in 1 Kgs 19:20; Ruth and Naomi in Ruth 1:14). Moreover, the twin brothers Jacob and Esau embrace, kiss, and weep when they are reunited in Gen 33:4, and David and Jonathan are brothers-in-law. Additionally, in regard to weeping, David will later weep in the face of another calamitous event—the revolt of his son Absalom (2 Sam 15:30). While David and Jonathan’s farewell is certainly emotional, it is hardly an erotic scene, as David’s life is under threat and he is being forced into a fugitive exile.

While, as shown above, 1 Samuel 20 particularly shows the political dimensions of David and Jonathan’s relationship, this verse nicely demonstrates that relationships based upon political allegiance were not without genuine affection and intense devotion. Any notion of an erotic component to this fidelity, however, is an insinuation at best. In light of the rest of the David and Jonathan material, it seems more likely that 1 Samuel 20:41 illustrates the emotional dimensions of a political allegiance.

#### ***4.6 Final Meeting: 1 Samuel 23:16-18***

After David escapes Saul, he flees further and further away into the Judean wilderness as Saul continues to pursue him (1 Sam 21-26). While Saul futilely searches for David, Jonathan comes to David at Horesh (or “the wood”) in the wilderness of

---

<sup>349</sup> See Ackerman’s discussion in reference to the Epic of Gilgamesh as well as David and Jonathan, *When Heroes Love*, 67; 183-184.

Ziph.<sup>350</sup> How Jonathan knows where to find David without Saul’s knowledge is not explained, but once again he chooses to stand by his treaty partner over his father since he does not inform Saul of David’s whereabouts. Jonathan encourages David and tells him not to be afraid because Saul will never find him (1 Sam 23:16-17). Jonathan then goes on to predict that David will be king over Israel and that he will be David’s second-in-command (*wě’attâ timlok ‘al-yiśrā’ēl wě’ānōkî ‘ehteh-lěkā lěmišneh*).<sup>351</sup> Jonathan even asserts that his father Saul also knows that this is what will come to pass (*gam-šā’ûl ‘ābî yōdēa’*). David and Jonathan then make yet another pact (*wayyikrētû šēnēhem bērit lipnē YHWH*), and David stays in Horesh while Jonathan goes home. This is the third time David and Jonathan make a pact within the narrative, which certainly suggests that the author/editor intentionally emphasized their treaty relationship.<sup>352</sup>

What Jonathan suggests implicitly in 1 Samuel 20:13, he states explicitly here: that David will become king after Saul.<sup>353</sup> This is the first of three instances in the narratives about David set in the wilderness of Judah that another person predicts his future kingship—Saul makes this prediction when David spares his life in 1 Samuel 24:21 and in 1 Samuel 25:30 Abigail refers to David becoming “ruler over Israel” (*nāgîd ‘al-yiśrā’ēl*) when she persuades David not to take revenge on her husband. This is an important element of the overall narrative of David’s rise since this is when David is at

---

<sup>350</sup> Most commentators think this location could be Khirbet Khoreisa, which about 2 miles from Tell Zîp (located approximately 5 miles SSE from Hebron). See McCarter, *I Samuel*, 374.

<sup>351</sup> Jonathan’s prediction is only half correct since he will not live long enough to become David’s second-in-command.

<sup>352</sup> The emphasis on covenants could be the work of Dtr.

<sup>353</sup> Saul himself is presented as understanding this state of affairs, obliquely in 1 Samuel 20:31 and later explicitly in 1 Samuel 24:20.

his lowest point, living as a fugitive in the wilderness.<sup>354</sup> Thus the David Narrative continues to assert David's imminent ascendance in the midst of David's exiled existence. Interestingly, none of these characters is a prophet, nor are they a subordinate of David's. In fact, they are all David's social superiors and their families stand in opposition to David's rise. It is extraordinary for someone in Jonathan's position to make his statement in 1 Samuel 23:17 and must have been crafted by those loyal to David. Through Jonathan's unambiguous acceptance of David's leadership, as well as the two men's alliance, the author/editor of this passage seeks both to defend David from accusations of being a usurper or having a part in Jonathan's death and also to legitimize David's eventual takeover as king of Israel in place of the Saulides.

The three pacts between David and Jonathan evolve toward David's future kingship over Israel in place of the Saulides. In 1 Samuel 18:1-4 no dialogue is given, only the statement of the pact and Jonathan's gifts to David. Within the military context of David's victory over Goliath, it is not overtly clear that kingship is the immediate focus, though the audience of course already knows what happens. In 1 Samuel 20 Jonathan swears to ascertain Saul's intentions for David and give David an honest report, but then he makes David pledge to maintain an alliance with Jonathan's family, which is suggestive of David's coming kingship and his future power over the descendants of Jonathan (cf. 2 Sam 9). In 1 Samuel 23 Jonathan overtly states that David will be king after Saul and that Jonathan will be his second-in-command before the two make a pact presumably confirming the allegiance of Jonathan to David. Through these successive pledges to each other, David and Jonathan ultimately switch political positions.

---

<sup>354</sup> For a discussion of the stories of David in the Judean wilderness as a liminal phase in preparation for his future kingship, see Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 200-231.

There are no erotic elements in this passage. Jonathan's visit to David speaks to the absolute trust David has for Jonathan and his certainty that Jonathan will privilege his loyalty to David over his loyalty to his father the king. Thus far, however, there are several parallels between David's interactions with Jonathan and those with his early wives Michal and Abigail. As discussed above (section 3.2.2), both Michal and Jonathan are said to "love" David, privilege their support of David over their loyalty to Saul, help David escape danger from Saul and deceive their father in doing so. Abigail and Jonathan both affirm David's future kingship while he is a fugitive from Saul. The parallels in the accounts of David and his wives and the importance of political love language suggests the interweaving of originally separate narrative arguments for the justification of David's kingship that have a similar trajectory.

This passage marks the last time David and Jonathan see one another. Jonathan, along with Saul, will die in battle against the Philistines at Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam 31).

#### ***4.7. David's Lament: 2 Samuel 1:26***

Though David is a vassal of Achish of Gath at the time of the battle of Mt. Gilboa, the narrative makes clear that he is not at the battle where Saul and Jonathan lose their lives but far away in Ziklag (1 Sam 29-30). Despite Saul's repeated efforts to kill him, when David hears the news that Saul and Jonathan are dead, he publicly mourns their passing and sings a dirge in honor of both men, the king and his son (2 Sam 1:19-27).<sup>355</sup> At the end of the poem comes a crucial verse for describing the relationship between David and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:26). Here, David specifically addresses Jonathan:

---

<sup>355</sup> David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is believed by many scholars to be ancient, even dating to the time of David, and some even think that David himself composed it. On the ancient date of the lament, see Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (Missoula, Mo: Scholars Press, 1975), 6; also Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan,  
you were exceedingly gracious to me;  
Your love for me was wonderful,<sup>356</sup>  
surpassing the love of women.

*ṣar-lî 'ālēkā 'āhî yěhônātān*  
*nā'amtā lî mē'ōd*  
*nīplē'atā 'ahābātkā lî*  
*mē'ahābat nāšîm*

In the first line that David calls Jonathan his “brother” (‘āhî), and, in fact, through David’s marriage to Michal (1 Sam 18:20-29), the two men are brothers-in-law, even though Saul has remarried Michal to another man in David’s absence (1 Sam 25:44). Moreover, while “brother” can be a term of endearment, even a romantic term,<sup>357</sup> it also

---

University Press, 1973), 122-23; Freedman, “The Refrain in David’s Lament,” in *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 263-274; and McCarter, *II Samuel*, 78-79, who lucidly presents the arguments for Davidic composition, which include: the exact match between the content of the poem with the narrative context, the lament would serve little to no purpose long after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, the highly personal statements about Jonathan, and the tradition that David was a musician. Cf. Anderson, *II Samuel*, 14. Some have argued for a later poet writing in the name of David (Grønbaek, *Aufstieg*, 221; T. L. Fenton, *UF* 1 [1969]: 68) and still others assert that a shorter poem (vv. 26-27) was written by David and later expanded (cf. F. Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel* [ZBK AT 9; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981], 189, and Hans J. Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis* [Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1994], 96).

One argument for considering the poem to be early is that 2 Sam 1:26 fits the narratives of David and Jonathan. However, it is also possible that this line was added at the end of an existing elegy of Saul and Jonathan in order to fit the narrative portrayal of David’s relationship with Jonathan. Thus, while the lament could be early, the last line would have been written later, around the same time as other David and Jonathan material. This possibility would have important implications for the use of treaty language found in the narratives and the lament. This idea was suggested to me by Daniel Fleming, personal communication, who attributed it to Mark Smith.

<sup>356</sup> MT has the anomalous form *npl'th*. Cross and Freedman read *npl' 'th* “you were extraordinary,” suggesting that an *aleph* was lost due to haplography (*Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*, 17-18, and later Freedman, “The Refrain in David’s Lament,” 265, 271). However, McCarter (*II Samuel*, 73) suggests that this form is based on a final-*aleph* verb, which frequently follow the patterns of final-*he* verbs. Hertzberg (*I and II Samuel*, 236, n. d) suggests a conflation of two forms. Despite the differences in the explanation of the form of *npl'th*, most seem to agree on the basic meaning of the word.

<sup>357</sup> Schroer and Staubli, “Saul, David, and Jonathan,” 30-31, suggest that here “brother” could indicate an erotic nuance based on Egyptian love poetry and the biblical Song of Songs. Cf. also Comstock, *Gay Theology*, 88; Römer and Bonjour, *L'homosexualité*, 99. I discuss the use of sibling terminology in love poetry in section 6.3 on Amnon’s rape of Tamar.

designates a treaty partner,<sup>358</sup> and Jonathan and David are presented as making a pact three times (1 Sam 18:3; 20:12-16; 23:18). Given the permeation of treaty language throughout the David and Jonathan material, the understanding of the term “brother” as treaty partner seems more appropriate in this context. The designation of Jonathan as David’s “brother” suggests a parity relationship, whereas father-son language is used for unequal alliances. This further complicates our understanding of the relative status of David to Jonathan throughout the David Narrative and suggests a somewhat fluid adaptation of diplomatic treaty language into a politically-charged narrative.

The verb I have initially translated above as “you were gracious”<sup>359</sup> (*nā‘amtā*) comes from the root  $\sqrt{n}‘m$ , which has a basic meaning of “good” or “pleasant.” In 2 Samuel 1:26 this phrase has been rendered variously as “you have been very pleasant to me;”<sup>360</sup> “you were so dear to me;”<sup>361</sup> “you were so delightful to me;”<sup>362</sup> and greatly beloved were you to me.”<sup>363</sup> However, since  $\sqrt{n}‘m$  is very similar in meaning to the

---

<sup>358</sup> For examples, see 1 Kings 9:13, referring to the alliance between Hiram and Solomon; 1 Kings 20:34, between Ahab and Ben-Hadad; *EA* 1-3, 6-9, 11, 16-17, 19-21, 23-24, 27-30, 33-35, 37-41. In a letter from the thirteenth-century BCE Hittite king Hattusili III trying to repair diplomatic relations with Kadašman-Enlil of Babylon, he repeatedly refers to the “love” he bears Kadašman-Enlil and speaks of the young king as his “brother,” reminding him that Hattusili and his father were “affectionate brothers” (see Albertine Hagenbuchner, *Die Korrespondenz der Hethiter* [2. Teil; Texte der Hethiter 16; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989], 281-284; Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996], 133, 135). See also the discussion in Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 190-191, who notes the possible connection to love poetry but argues that a covenant interpretation is much more plausible. See also Olyan, “Surpassing the Love of Women,” 87; Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 3-11; Michael Fishbane, “The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 314-315.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 12, though he does not discuss how he arrived at this translation.

<sup>360</sup> NKJ, NAS, Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 236.

<sup>361</sup> JPS, NIV, McCarter, *II Samuel*, 67.

<sup>362</sup> Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 190; Schroer and Staubli, “Saul, David and Jonathan,” 30; cf. Frank Moore Cross, Jr. and David Noel Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*, 17.

<sup>363</sup> NRSV.



adjective *tôb* “good,”  $\sqrt{n} 'm$  might also function like *tôb* in relation to political commitment. Tentatively, I posit that  $\sqrt{n} 'm$  in David’s lament might be a poetic usage of a word to convey what is usually rendered by the adjective *tôb*: right behavior within a political alliance.

In Ugaritic the root  $\sqrt{n} 'm$  has a similar semantic range to Hebrew, generally meaning “good.”<sup>364</sup> Within the Ugaritic corpus, there are several instances in which  $n 'm$  is applied to a royal figure and has a political nuance. First, in a letter addressed to the king of Egypt (KTU 2.81), Pharaoh is described as: “the  $n 'm$  king, the just king” (*mlk n 'm mlk šdq*).<sup>365</sup> In this diplomatic language,  $n 'm$  is in parallel with *šdq*, meaning “just” or “righteous,” so here  $n 'm$  denotes a similar royal quality, perhaps the king’s magnanimity or beneficence.

Also, though broken, the *recto* of the Ugaritic king list (KTU 1.113), seems to be a devotional or liturgical text and what can be rendered from the text is the alternation between two musical instruments and the word *ln 'm* “to/for the  $\sqrt{n} 'm$  one.”<sup>366</sup> Kenneth Kitchen has suggested that this text is a hymn to Rapi’u, the ruler of the dead, which connects the text on the broken *recto* to the king list on the *verso* of the tablet.<sup>367</sup> Kitchen furthermore understands the  $n 'mn$  in the text to refer to the reigning king,<sup>368</sup> whom, he

---

<sup>364</sup> According to Dennis Pardee,  $n 'm$  in Ugaritic is “the primary adjective for expressing goodness, *tôb* the secondary one, that is, the distribution is just the opposite of the one in biblical Hebrew” (“Dawn and Dusk,” *CoS* 1.87, 276, n.5).

<sup>365</sup> KTU 2.81: 31; also partially reconstructed in ll. 2, 11, 20.

<sup>366</sup> KTU 1.113, ll. 2, 4, 6, 9, 10.

<sup>367</sup> Kitchen, “The King List of Ugarit,” *UF* 9 (1977):140. He asserts that Rapi’u would be “the most appropriate patron of a rite or hymn performed in relation to deceased kings of Ugarit.”

<sup>368</sup> However, Dennis Pardee (*Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, WAW 10 [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 201 [Text #56]) thinks the reference could be to a deceased king or to the king of the Rapi’uma.

argues, is the “immediate beneficiary of the devotions,”<sup>369</sup> and he translates *ln ‘mn* as “to/for the Favored One.” If Kitchen is correct,  $\sqrt{n} ‘m$  would signify that the king is the recipient of divine favor. However, it would also be possible to understand similarly the use of the term  $\sqrt{n} ‘m$  here to the way it is used in the letter to Pharaoh just discussed, as “to/for the ‘good’ (i.e., beneficent) one,” as Dennis Pardee has suggested.<sup>370</sup> In this case, the phrase *ln ‘mn* would indicate that the king is the bestower of favor rather than the one upon whom favor is bestowed.

The term  $\sqrt{n} ‘m$  is also part of an epithet applied to the royal figure of Kirta. Four times Kirta is called, “the *n ‘m* one, the lad of ‘Ilu” (*n ‘mn ḡlm il*).<sup>371</sup> Here *n ‘m* is variously translated as “gracious,”<sup>372</sup> “pleasant,”<sup>373</sup> or “handsome.”<sup>374</sup> Since Kirta is a king, *n ‘m* could be understood similarly to the way *n ‘m* is used in the diplomatic letter to Pharaoh, with Kirta as the “gracious” king, who generally extends his royal favor to his subjects. However, Kirta’s epithet is parallel to “the lad of ‘Ilu” (*ḡlm il*), so both phrases are connected to the god ‘Ilu. Furthermore, in three of the four examples it is ‘Ilu who is speaking and referring to Kirta as *n ‘mn*. Thus in these contexts, I would suggest that *n ‘mn* most likely conveys Kirta’s favor with ‘Ilu and could be translated “favored one of

---

<sup>369</sup> Kitchen, “King List,” 140.

<sup>370</sup> Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 201.

<sup>371</sup> KTU 1.14 i 40, ii 8; 1.15 II 15, 20.

<sup>372</sup> N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: the Words of Ilmilku and his Colleagues* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 184; 208.

<sup>373</sup> Edward L. Greenstein, “Kirta,” in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW 9; ed. Simon B. Parker; Atlanta: SBL, 1997), 13; 24.

<sup>374</sup> Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, vol. 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 614.

'Ilu," communicating that Kirta, the king, has the divine sanction of 'Ilu, the chief deity of the Ugaritic pantheon.<sup>375</sup>

Moreover, in two biblical examples the term  $\sqrt{n}'m$  also seems to indicate divine favor. In an oracle addressed to Egypt, Ezek 32:19 asks rhetorically "who surpasses you in  $\sqrt{n}'m$ ?" (*mimmî nā'āmtā*), which is often translated as "beauty."<sup>376</sup> However, since the rest of the verse states "go down, and lie with the uncircumcised" (*rēdā wēhāškēbā 'et- 'ārēlīm*), "beauty" does not seem like the appropriate term in this context. The entire verse conveys the idea that Egypt will not be honored in Sheol; its fallen will receive no special treatment. Thus a better translation for *nā'āmtā* in this verse might be "favor"<sup>377</sup> since it is opposed to a scenario in which Egypt is envisioned as merely equal to other nations. Moreover, Proverbs 24:24-25 states, "Whoever says to the wicked, 'You are innocent,' will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations; but those who rebuke the wicked will have  $\sqrt{n}'m$ ; and a good blessing will come upon them" (*'ōmēr lērāšā' šaddîq 'āttā yiqqēbūhū 'ammîm yiz'āmūhū lē'ummîm wēlammôkîhîm yin'ām wa'ālêhem tābô'*

<sup>375</sup> Simon Parker, "The Historical Composition of *Krt* and the Cult of El," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 173-174.

<sup>376</sup> So NKJ, NRSV, NAS, JPS. The term  $\sqrt{n}'m$  in Hebrew can impart an aesthetic sense, such as "lovely." For instance, in the Song of Songs 1:16, the girl says to the boy, "How handsome you are, my beloved, indeed, how lovely!" (*hinnāk yāpeh dōdî 'ap nā'im*), and in Song 7:7 the male speaker, who has been describing in detail his beloved's beauty (Song 7:7), exclaims "how beautiful you are, how lovely" (*mah-yyāpît ūmah-nnā'amtē*), so in these examples  $\sqrt{n}'m$  seems to refer to an attractive outward appearance. Using this example, Schroer and Staubli, "David, Saul, and Jonathan," 30-31 suggest erotic overtones in David's lament, but they are clearly overreaching here since the aesthetic does not necessarily include the erotic. Genesis 49:15 and Psalm 141:6 refer to inanimate objects, land and words respectively, as  $\sqrt{n}'m$ . As in Hebrew, the term  $\sqrt{n}'m$  in Ugaritic often has an aesthetic sense. In KTU 1.23, for example, the gods Dawn and Dusk are described as  $\sqrt{n}'m$ , often translated as "beautiful," which, as Mark Smith (who renders the term "goodly") has shown, refers both to their physical appearance and large size (*The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23: Royal Constructions of Opposition, Intersection, Integration, and Domination* [Atlanta: SBL, 2006], 33-34). Also, KTU 1.96, an incantation against the Evil Eye,  $\sqrt{n}'m$  is parallel to *tp*, indicating an attractive appearance.

<sup>377</sup> Cf. NIV.

*birkat-tôb*). Here  $\sqrt{n}'m$  is often translated “delight,”<sup>378</sup> but, again, a translation that conveyed a sense of favor would be more fitting since it is paired with “good blessings” and in opposition to being “cursed” and “abhorred.”

In light of these biblical and Ugaritic examples of  $\sqrt{n}'m$ , David’s statement in his lament over Saul and Jonathan that Jonathan was “exceedingly gracious” (*nā‘amtā lî mē’ōd*) to him most likely signifies Jonathan’s political support for David. In 1 Samuel 19,  $\sqrt{hp}š$  seems to have both a “top-down” sense of the favor or preference shown by a political superior to a subordinate as well as a “bottom-up” meaning of voluntary support for a leader. Also, the idea of choice or voluntary support is important for  $\sqrt{hp}š$  in a political context. However,  $\sqrt{n}'m$  usually comes from the senior party in the relationship, whether from the king to his people or from the gods to the king, and there is less of a sense of choice and more of a sense of  $\sqrt{n}'m$  an appropriate designation for the royal office or for upright behavior. Thus a more specific translation of the line might be: “I am distressed over you, my covenant partner Jonathan; you showed great beneficence toward me.”

The Hebrew and Ugaritic examples of  $\sqrt{n}'m$  with the sense of “beneficence” indicate that the term could be applied both to the giver of favor as well as the recipient, and in David’s lament he depicts Jonathan as the former. This understanding of  $\sqrt{n}'m$  directly connects with the narrative tradition in Samuel in which Jonathan indeed “greatly favors” David, interceding on his behalf to Saul and saving his life. As son of the king, Jonathan has shown David great beneficence, similar to the Ugaritic examples of  $\sqrt{n}'m$  applied to a royal figure. Jonathan has acted appropriately to his office as heir apparent

---

<sup>378</sup> So NKJ, NRSV, NAS.

to Saul and has also kept loyalty to David despite the position of his father. Again, Jonathan is depicted as fit for kingship, which underscores Jonathan's designation of David as the true successor to Saul. It is the royal favor of Jonathan, son of King Saul, to which David refers in his lament and which makes the most appropriate parallel to the covenantal "love" in the next line.

In the second bicolon, David speaks of Jonathan's "love" ( $\sqrt{hb}$ ) for him as being "wonderful" (*nīplē'atā*), specifically more wonderful than the "love of women" (*mē'ahābat nāšīm*). Much has been said about this one line of poetry regarding the relationship between David and Jonathan because David seems to say that he prefers Jonathan's love over the love of women. However, as we have seen in the narrative passages involving David and Jonathan, the term "love" ( $\sqrt{hb}$ ) is part of the rhetoric of covenant agreements, and as discussed in the first bicolon, David calls Jonathan his "brother" (*'āh*), reminiscent of kinship language in political alliances. It would seem likely then, that the "love" David speaks of here in reference to Jonathan should be understood as part of this rhetoric and interpreted as primarily political in nature. Indeed, the love is entirely one-sided,<sup>379</sup> both here and in the prose, because the love in question is Jonathan's commitment to David as future king.

Though the phrase "love of women" does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, most interpret the phrase as indicating erotic or sexual love, given that the verb "love"  $\sqrt{hb}$  generally includes a sexual component when describing relations between

---

<sup>379</sup> Fewell and Gunn (*Gender Power, and Promise*, 150) also make this observation about the one-sidedness of the "love" between David and Jonathan but interpret the situation as Jonathan's love being unrequited, which I think is a misconstrual of the narrative context.

opposing genders.<sup>380</sup> However, since the word “women” (*nāšîm*) in Hebrew is synonymous with “wives,” it is also possible that the phrase “love of women” specifically refers to marital relationships. Even if this is not the case, the “love of women” would certainly include the love of wives. Marriage is also a covenant relationship which is expected to include love, but marriage can often be highly political, as seen in chapter 3.

Saul Olyan has also argued that the narrative depictions of David and Jonathan fits language used for political alliances.<sup>381</sup> However, when comparing 2 Samuel 1:26 to ancient Near Eastern treaty contexts, he points out that 2 Samuel 1:26 “does not compare the love of one treaty partner to that of another in the same class.”<sup>382</sup> This observation leads him to conclude that in this particular instance, the love between Jonathan and David does not indicate covenantal love but erotic or sexual love. In contrast to Olyan, I do not find any objection with a comparison between covenantal and sexual love in this line of poetry. Even though this comparison does not occur in treaty documents, as entirely different literary categories, treaties and laments subscribe to different “rules.” The author of this highly poetic dirge is playing off of the rhetorical and semantic overlaps between covenantal and erotic/sexual “love,” making a creative comparison between two different types of “love.”<sup>383</sup> Therefore the very comparison Jonathan’s love

---

<sup>380</sup> See discussion in Olyan, “Surpassing the Love of Women,” 93-95.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 85-92.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. Zehnder, “Observations,” 140-142. Moreover, in my discussion of the story of Amnon’s rape of Tamar (section 6.3), I argue that the David Narrative also utilizes love language in a unique way.

surpasses the sexual “love of women” suggests that Jonathan’s relationship for David is, in fact, understood as distinctive from erotic love.<sup>384</sup>

The phrase “love of women,” is put on David’s lips as a good thing which Jonathan’s “love” surpasses. David describes Jonathan’s love with the term *nīplē’atâ*, which means “wonderful,” in the sense of being “unusual” or even “miraculous.”<sup>385</sup> Thus David is saying that the loyalty Jonathan showed to him as a covenant partner was so strong that it—surprisingly—exceeded even the expected fidelity of women towards their husbands. While the phrase “love of women” could be generic, it could also specifically apply to David within a narrative context, as the love of Jonathan certainly does. With this understanding in mind, the bicolon could indicate that the covenantal relationship with Jonathan is stronger and more important than any of David’s political marriages, though each of these is certainly advantageous. Indeed, within the David Narrative, David’s alliance with Jonathan is portrayed as more beneficial to his ascent to power than any one of his marriage alliances.<sup>386</sup>

Although overall I advocate a political interpretation of the term “love” in the narratives of David and Jonathan, this does not mean that I disregard any emotional sentiments conveyed in 2 Samuel 1:26. David seems to be saying that while Jonathan

---

<sup>384</sup> However, if the phrase “love of women” means marital love, “love of wives,” then two types of covenant relationships are being compared, though they are still distinct.

<sup>385</sup> This could be an example of poetic hyperbole, which occurs elsewhere in the poem, where Saul and Jonathan are described as “swifter than eagles, stronger than lions” (*minnēšārīm qallû mē’ārāyôt gābērû*). Cf. McKenzie, *King David*, 85; Zehnder, “David-Jonathan-Geschichten,” 155-156, and “Observations,” 140-142.

<sup>386</sup> A similar comparison to marriage when describing the relationship between two men can be seen in the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic. In the dream accounts that foreshadow the arrival of Enkidu, Gilgamesh “loves” (*√r’m*) and “caresses” (*√hbb*) the object (axe/meteor) “like a wife” (*kî aššate/im*). See the discussion in Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, 47-59. However, while Enkidu and Gilgamesh share considerable adventures, it does not seem that Enkidu fulfills a similar beneficiary role for Gilgamesh’s political advancement.

was still living, his loyalty toward David surpassed all expectations of a political alliance. Indeed, in the narratives describing their interactions, Jonathan is “exceedingly gracious” to David and demonstrates “wonderful love” for him: Jonathan enters into an alliance with David (1 Sam 18:3; 20:8, 11-17; 23:18), warns David of danger and intercedes on his behalf to Saul (1 Sam 19:1-7), investigates Saul’s position towards David and helps David escape from Saul (1 Sam 20), and encourages David while he is living as a fugitive (1 Sam 23:16-18). Jonathan does all of these things despite his father Saul’s stance that David should be killed, demonstrating that his treaty-based kinship with David supersedes his biological kinship with Saul, something quite deserving of the description *niplē’atâ*.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

Throughout this discussion of the passages which describe the relationship between David and Jonathan, I have shown that I understand this relationship to be primarily a political alliance. The David and Jonathan material is an exemplary effort on the part of the David Narrative to present two arguments simultaneously: David’s legitimacy for the Israelite kingship and a justification for David’s ostensible loyalty to the house of Saul.

Finally, I would like to address briefly a view which permeates various interpretations of David and Jonathan’s relationship, which is an understanding of the two characters as “friends.”<sup>387</sup> I find this view distorts somewhat the depiction of David and Jonathan found in 1-2 Samuel in its desire to help a modern audience to relate to the

---

<sup>387</sup> See especially Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*, esp. 128-150; Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, and Weems, “Missing Jonathan,” as well as Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, and McKenzie, *King David*. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 239-240, notes that “the lament has a special depth at the point where David thinks of his friendship with Jonathan.”



ancient text. For one thing, the Hebrew term “friend” is never used in any passage involving David and Jonathan.<sup>388</sup> Instead of friends, David and Jonathan are allies who have a formal covenantal affiliation and interact entirely against a political backdrop. To be sure, the narrative shows individual preferences and/or feelings, as shown in the above discussions of *√hpš* and *√n‘m*. I do not wish to deny that the narrative portrays genuine affection and loyalty among the two men; on the contrary, this is the narrative’s goal. However, the relationship between David and Jonathan is built upon mutual obligations, stipulated by pledge agreements, and loyalty to those obligations. This type of relationship is rather distinct from many modern definitions of friendship. Since kinship through political alliance could crumble more easily than biological kinship, it is Jonathan’s loyalty to David under intense pressure from his father and later David’s loyalty to Jonathan’s house that the author wishes to emphasize in order to strengthen the justification for the kingship of David over Israel. Thus the relationship between David and Jonathan is one with strings attached—a political alliance.

---

<sup>388</sup> Moreover, David and Jonathan never share an adventure or a battle. When compared to Gilgameš and Enkidu of the Mesopotamian *Gilgameš Epic* or Achilles and Patroclus of the Homeric *Iliad*, as David and Jonathan often are, these extra-biblical literary pairs seem more intimate and less obligatory—in short, more like friendships—than David and Jonathan.

## CHAPTER 5

### ACCUSATIONS OF SEXUAL IMPROPRIETY

#### 5.1. Introduction

Categorically falling in between narratives in which sex can only be assumed and episodes that overtly recount the occurrence of sexual relations are stories that present accusations of sexual impropriety. Three times in the David Narrative a person is accused of a sexual, or sexually-charged, offense: Ishba‘al, king of Israel, accuses Abner, the commander of Israel’s fighting men, of having sexual relations with Rizpah, his father Saul’s former consort (2 Sam 3:6-11); David’s wife Michal publicly denigrates David after he leads a cultic procession, implying that he has exposed himself indecently (2 Sam 6:16; 20-23); and King Solomon accuses his half-brother Adonijah of attempting to usurp the throne when Adonijah requests marriage to David’s “nurse” (*sokenet*)<sup>389</sup> Abishag (1 Kgs 2:13-25). In these narratives, sexuality is part of the characters’ discourse though sexual relations are not part of the narratives. The accusations are all sexually charged; however, it is not necessarily clear if the person accused is guilty of any sexual offense.

In each episode, the accusation is initially presented in sexual language but responded to in political terms. Thus when Ishba‘al accuses Abner of having sexual relations with Saul’s *pīlegeš*, Abner responds by saying that he has shown loyalty to the House of Saul; when Michal jeers at David for flaunting himself publicly, David retorts that Yahweh has chosen him as king instead of her father; and when Adonijah presents his marriage request, Solomon responds by saying he might as well have asked for the

---

<sup>389</sup> I discuss this term and Abishag’s role below in the present chapter and also in sections 3.4.2 and 6.6.

kingdom. Indeed, the outcome of each accusation has considerable political consequences within the David Narrative. After Ishba'al's accusation, Abner defects to David, a severe blow to Ishba'al's military and political power. Shortly thereafter, Abner and Ishba'al are both assassinated, and David becomes king over Israel as well as Judah (2 Sam 3:22-5:3). Immediately following Michal's quarrel with David, the text mentions that she never has children, making it clear that there will be no Saulide blood-line within the House of David. Solomon's execution of Adonijah eliminates a potential threat to his crown, and Adonijah is the first victim of the purge at the beginning of Solomon's reign when the new king solidifies his rule over Israel and Judah (1 Kgs 2:46b). That these situations are inherently political is not lost on any of the characters within the narratives. Moreover, in each case the accusation arguably represents an attempted power check against the offending party. Thus the alleged sexual offenses actually serve as vehicles for a political challenge.

Each accusation is set shortly after a significant shift in power has occurred. In 2 Samuel 3:6-11, Ishba'al has succeeded his father Saul but rules in a reduced territory due to the victory of the Philistines at the Battle of Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam 31). Moreover, his brief two-year reign is constantly beset by war with David (2 Sam 3:1). In 2 Samuel 6:16; 20-23, David, already king of Judah, has also come to power over Israel after Ishba'al's assassination and rules both polities (2 Sam 5:1-4). Furthermore, he has conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and made it his new capital (2 Sam 5:4-10). In 1 Kings 2, Solomon has just become king in a contested succession and initiates his reign with a purge, executing those perceived to be threats to his power. Thus within the David Narrative, each accusation takes place in the midst of the relative instability created by

significant political upheaval. Two of the episodes, 2 Samuel 3:6-11 and 1 Kings 2:13-25, involve questions of sexual access to women sexually associated with the previous, but now deceased, king. We now turn to the first of these.

### **5.2. *Ishba'al against Abner: 2 Samuel 3:6-11***

In this episode, King Ishba'al of Israel accuses Abner, the head of Israel's military forces, of having sexual relations with his father Saul's *pīlegeš*, Rizpah (2 Sam 3:7). Abner becomes so incensed at Ishba'al's questioning of his conduct and his loyalty that he declares that he will defect from his allegiance to Ishba'al and instead will support Ishba'al's enemy David (2 Sam 3:8-10). Promptly, Abner makes a treaty with David, but he is murdered by David's military commander Joab because of a family vendetta (2 Sam 3:22-27). Soon afterwards, Ishba'al is also assassinated and David becomes king over Israel (2 Sam 4:1-5:4).

*Abner, Ishba'al's "Commander-in-Chief": 2 Samuel 2:8-9, 3:6*

After Saul and Jonathan are killed at the Battle of Mt. Gilboa, Abner establishes Saul's son Ishba'al as king over a reduced Israelite state (2 Sam 2:8-9). Abner is Saul's first cousin, and since he is already commander of the troops during Saul's reign, one assumes that in age he is Ishba'al's elder.<sup>390</sup> Despite Israel's devastating defeat by the Philistines, the kingship still passes to a remaining son of Saul, and it seems to be Abner who ensures Ishba'al's succession: "Now Abner, son of Ner, the commander of Saul's troops had taken Ishba'al, son of Saul, and brought him across to Mahanaim and made him king over Gilead, the Geshurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin—over all Israel"

---

<sup>390</sup> Though speculative, it is possible that the reason Ishba'al is not killed at the Battle of Mt. Gilboa is because at the time he is too young to fight and that the situation is of a very young king with Abner acting as regent. Such an interpretation would give a different nuance to the episode.

(*wě'abnēr ben-nēr śar-šābā' 'āšer lēšā'ûl lāqah 'et-'iš bōšet ben-šā'ûl wayya'ābirēhû maḥnāyīm wayyamlikēhû 'el-haggil'ad wě'el-haggēšûrî*<sup>391</sup>*wě'el-yizrē'e'l wě'al-'eprayīm wě'al-binyāmīn wě'al-yiśrā'ēl kullōh*). The language of 2 Samuel 2:8-9 (both  $\sqrt{br}$  and  $\sqrt{mlk}$  are in Hiphil) makes it clear that the real leader in the wake of Saul's demise is Abner; however, Abner does not use his power to take control of the state himself but rather sets up Saul's remaining son as king.

Meanwhile, David has been anointed king over Judah, and war breaks out between the two polities. According to Dtr, over the course of incessant warfare, David continues to gain power while Ishba'al's power wanes. Dtr summarizes the relative fortunes of each house thus (2 Sam 3:1): "David grew stronger and stronger while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker" (*wēdāwid hōlēk wēḥāzēq ûbêt šā'ûl hōlēkīm wēdallīm*).<sup>392</sup>

During the time of war between David and Ishba'al, Abner is "making himself strong in the House of Saul" (*wě'abnēr hāyâ mithazzēq bēbêt šā'ûl*) (2 Sam 3:6). As Steven McKenzie remarks, "Abner was the real obstacle standing in the way of David becoming king over both Israel and Judah."<sup>393</sup> Graeme Auld points out that Abner is the exception within the House of Saul; instead of growing weaker, Abner grows stronger.<sup>394</sup>

This puts Abner in parallel with David as described in 2 Samuel 3:1 and foreshadows

---

<sup>391</sup> Following Syr. and Vulg. MT has *h'swry* "the Ashurites" or perhaps "Assyrians." Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 83. See also Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 69, n. 76.

<sup>392</sup> This verse also essentially summarizes Dtr's overall handling of his Saulide/Davidic traditions.

<sup>393</sup> McKenzie, *King David*, 117.

<sup>394</sup> Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 377.

Abner's shift in loyalty.<sup>395</sup> I take Abner's "making himself strong in the House of Saul," to indicate that Abner is exerting power in support of the continuation of Saul's dynasty<sup>396</sup> rather than vying for kingship in place of Ishba'al.<sup>397</sup> Similar language is used to describe David's supporters in 1 Chronicles 11:10: David's mighty men "strengthen themselves...in his [David's] kingdom" (*hammithazzēqîm...bēmalkûtô*) in order to "make him king" (*lēhamlikô*). This is very similar to the language used to describe Abner within Saul's kingdom—the Hithpael participle of  $\sqrt{h}zq$  occurs in 2 Samuel 3:6 and the Hiphil of  $\sqrt{mlk}$  in 2 Samuel 2:9.<sup>398</sup> David's mighty men "strengthen themselves" on David's behalf to help solidify his kingship, and Abner's portrayal in 2 Samuel 3:6 should be understood similarly as in support of Ishba'al.

#### *Rizpah, Pīlegeš of Saul: 2 Samuel 3:7*

In addition to describing Abner within the house of Saul, the text also provides the information in 2 Samuel 3:7 that "Saul had a *pīlegeš* named Rizpah, the daughter of Ayya" (*ûlēšā'ûl pīlegeš ûšmāh rišpā bat-'ayyā*).<sup>399</sup> Rizpah plays a more prominent role as a grieving mother in 2 Samuel 21 in which her vigil over the bodies of her two sons and the five sons of Michal moves David to a mass funeral for the Saulides. However, in

---

<sup>395</sup> With others, I regard the original position of 2 Samuel 3:6 as directly after 2 Samuel 3:1 but the insertion of the list of David's sons born in Hebron in 2 Samuel 3:2-5 now separates 2 Samuel 3:1 from the rest of the episode. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 101-102; Auld, *I and II Samuel*, 377; Campbell (2 *Samuel*, 43) agrees and remarks that the list of sons was inserted here because of the language of the House of David: David is begetting sons, whereas Saul and his sons have died leaving only the weak Ishbaal.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Anderson, 2 *Samuel*, 55; Driver, *Hebrew Text*, 189; *HALOT*, 304.

<sup>397</sup> So McCarter, *II Samuel*, 112.

<sup>398</sup> Similarly, see 2 Chronicles 12:13: "So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned" (*wayyithazzēq hammelek rēḥab'āim biyrûšālaïm wayyimlok*). Cf. also 2 Chronicles 16:9; Daniel 10:21.

<sup>399</sup> LXX<sup>L</sup> includes the information that Abner had relations with Rizpah before Ishbaal's accusation, but McCarter (*II Samuel*, 105-106) is right to point out that the MT deliberately leaves the situation ambiguous.

2 Samuel 3:6-11 Rizpah functions as a sexual object by which the relative power of men is represented.<sup>400</sup> As a mother in 2 Samuel 21, she has narrative agency, but in 2 Samuel 3:6-11 she is absent from the story. Only the narrator mentions Rizpah by name—neither Ishba‘al nor Abner mention her name in their discourse. Both Rizpah’s name and patronymic are given, which is unusual for women in biblical narrative, though in Samuel women are often named. The inclusion of the name of Rizpah’s father could indicate that she is from an important family, which is perhaps the reason she becomes *pīlegeš* to the king of Israel.

The Hebrew word *pīlegeš* is usually translated “concubine,” but I have chosen not to translate the Hebrew since I believe the English word “concubine” prejudices the reader. I do occasionally use the word “consort,” as this term can apply to women designated *’iššâ* as well as *pīlegeš*. Since the term *pīlegeš* will be seen again in this study (see section 6.2), here I will briefly address my understanding of this term as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew word *pīlegeš* seems to be of non-Semitic origin.<sup>401</sup> The majority of the occurrences of the term refer to the *pīlagšîm* of patriarchs (Gen 22:24, 25:6, 35:22, 36:12; 1 Chron 1:32, 2:46-48, 7:14), and early kings of Israel and Judah (Saul: 2 Sam 3:7, 21:11; David: 2 Sam 5:13, 15:16, 16:21-22, 19:6, 20:3; 1 Chron 3:9; Solomon: 1 Kgs 11:3; Rehoboam: 2 Chr 11:21). The book of Judges also contains several attestations of *pīlegeš*, most of which are found in the account of the rape of the Levite’s *pīlegeš* in Judges 19-20, but there is also a reference in Judges 8:31 that

---

<sup>400</sup> Cf. Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 85.

<sup>401</sup> For a detailed discussions, see C. Rabin, “The Origin of the Hebrew Word *Pīlgeš*” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25 (1974): 353-64, who ultimately argues that the term is Philistine in origin, and Westbrook and Wells, *Everyday Law*, 65, who take it from Greek *pallax*.

Abimelech's mother was the *pīlegeš* of Gideon. Other attestations of the term *pīlegeš* include Song of Songs 6:8, Esther 2:14, and Ezekiel 23:20.<sup>402</sup>

The legal and social status of a *pīlegeš* is not entirely clear—the term does not appear in any legal texts and the narrative and poetic references present a rather confused picture. For example, since it appears that men in ancient Israel could have more than one wife, what is the difference between a “wife” (*'iššâ*) and a *pīlegeš*? Another question is whether a *pīlegeš* would have been a slave or a free woman. In Genesis 30:3-4, Bilhah is called Rachel's “maid,” (*'āmâ; šiphâ*) indicating her servant status, but Rachel gives Bilhah to Jacob as a “wife” (*'iššâ*), not a *pīlegeš*. However, Bilhah is also referred to as Jacob's *pīlegeš* in Genesis 35:22. In Judges 19, however, the Levite's *pīlegeš* does not seem to be a slave since she is able to leave her husband (Judg 19:1) and return to her father's house. When the Levite goes to retrieve her, it is to “speak to her heart” (*l'edabber 'al-lībbāh*), not to force her to return (Judg 19:3). From our limited data, it seems that the biblical material suggests that the institution of *pīlagšūt* could apply to both slave and free women.<sup>403</sup>

Peggy Day's defines “concubine” as “a female whose status in relation to her sole sexual partner, a non-slave male, is something other than primary wife.”<sup>404</sup> According to Raymond Westbrook and Bruce Wells, “The main characteristic of concubinage is that,

---

<sup>402</sup> In Ezek 23:20 *pīlegeš* is used for male sexual partners, perhaps with a pejorative sense. Though the plural of *pīlegeš* has a masculine ending, to my knowledge this is the only example where the term *pīlegeš* does not refer to females.

<sup>403</sup> Cf. Westbrook and Wells, *Everyday Law*, 64-65.

<sup>404</sup> Peggy Day, “Concubine” in *Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 273. Tikva Frymer-Kensky seems to agree in “Israel,” 1009.



unlike marriage, it does not produce legitimate heirs.”<sup>405</sup> I use the work of Day and Westbrook/Wells on concubines to help me understand the term *pīlegeš*, and, similarly, I regard a *pīlegeš* as signifying a woman who shares a husband in a polygamous (technically polygynous) marriage. Like the other women of the household, a *pīlegeš* owes her husband exclusive sexual fidelity, but a *pīlegeš* does not have the same legal and social status or inheritance privileges as women designated as *’iššā*. Within biblical narrative, it seems that after the advent of monarchy *pīlagšūt* become more associated with kings rather than private citizens. One imagines that a king’s *pīlegeš* would presumably have had more security and privileges than the wives of ordinary men, though they would still have had lower status than any of the king’s first-rank wives (*nāšīm*).<sup>406</sup> Thus though the *pīlagšūt* constitutes a legitimate marriage relationship, it is a second-tier type of marriage.

Beyond the question of her role as a *pīlegeš*, the depiction of Rizpah in the David Narrative results in more questions than answers. For example, how did Rizpah become a *pīlegeš* to King Saul in the first place? Is Rizpah Saul’s only *pīlegeš*, or is she one of several, even many? Also, what is Rizpah’s role after Saul’s death? Does she remain a part of the palace retinue under the new king Ishba‘al? Does she become Ishba‘al’s *pīlegeš* as well or does he only assume responsibility for her? This brief episode assumes knowledge of the institution of *pīlagšūt* that a modern audience simply does not possess; moreover, the purpose of the story is to explain why Abner would betray his king and

---

<sup>405</sup> Westbrook and Wells, *Everyday Law*, 65. Westbrook regards the situation described in Exodus 21:7-10, a daughter sold into slavery for sexual/reproductive purposes, as a form of concubinage (64).

<sup>406</sup> Rulers of other ancient Near Eastern polities are also attested as having multiple wives of various ranks. See the sections on marriage in Raymond Westbrook, ed., *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*; Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, esp. 111-129; Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 195-212 (Middle Assyrian palace decrees).

kinsman Ishba‘al to support David, not to provide details about Rizpah’s background and position in the House of Saul. However, there are a few details that can provide clues to help with our interpretation of Rizpah’s position within Saul’s household. Concerning the genesis of Rizpah’s marriage arrangement with Saul, the likeliest scenario would have been a socio-political marriage transaction between her father Ayya and Saul. Although Rizpah is not a first-rank wife, her marriage to the king of Israel would still benefit her family. The text does not mention if Saul has other *pīlagšîm*, though it does mention that he has a wife, Ahinoam, daughter of Ahimaaz (1 Sam 14:50). Regarding Rizpah’s position after the death of Saul, scholars often assume that new or incoming kings inherited the “royal harem,” of the previous king; that is, the women associated sexually with the previous king, be they *nāšîm* or *pīlagšîm*.<sup>407</sup> The David Narrative seems to presume that women sexually associated with a king were not allowed to marry again after the death of that king but stayed under the auspices of their deceased husband’s successor. Ishba‘al seems to assume authority over Rizpah in 2 Samuel 3:6-11, and Adonijah regards Solomon as responsible for Abishag in 1 Kings 2:13-25. This logic also seems to lie behind David’s quarantine of his *pīlagšîm* claimed by Absalom in 2 Samuel 20:3. While sexual relations with women of the royal harem might be assumed in a successor’s inheritance of the previous king’s household, Rizpah and Abishag are primarily associated with the previous king, not the successor, and David’s *pīlagšîm* are consistently viewed in terms of their relationship to David, never Absalom.

---

<sup>407</sup> For example, see Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 176.

*Accusation and Response: 2 Samuel 3:7-11*

The action of this episode is relatively brief, though it has significant repercussions. Ishba‘al<sup>408</sup> asks Abner (2 Sam 3:7), “Why did you have sex with my father’s *pīlegeš*?” (*maddûa ‘bā ‘tāh ‘el-pīlegeš ‘ābî*).<sup>409</sup> The phrase “my father’s *pīlegeš*” is key here—it is not Rizpah herself that is significant but the fact that she had previously belonged to King Saul. That Ishba‘al refers to Rizpah as “my father’s *pīlegeš*” suggests that Ishba‘al has not taken sexual possession of Rizpah for himself. However, his confrontation of Abner suggests that Ishba‘al regards himself as having authority over Rizpah and controlling whoever may have sexual access to her.

Ishba‘al’s question about Abner’s sexual conduct angers Abner, and he responds by saying (2 Sam 3:8-10):

Am I a dog’s head?!<sup>410</sup> So far<sup>411</sup> I have dealt loyally with the House of Saul, your father, on behalf of his kinsmen and allies and prevented you from falling into the hands of David,<sup>412</sup> yet now you charge me with an offense concerning a woman! May God do thus to Abner and more also: what Yahweh has sworn concerning David I will accomplish—transferring the kingship from the House of Saul and establishing the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba.

*hārō ‘š keleb ‘ānōkî hayyôm ‘e ‘ēseh-ḥesed ‘im-bêt šā ‘ûl ‘ābîkâ ‘al<sup>413</sup>-  
'ehāyw wē ‘al-mērē ‘ēhû wēlō ‘himšîtikâ bēyad-dāwid wattipqod ‘ālay  
'āwon hā ‘iššâ hayyôm kōh ya ‘āseh ‘ēlōhîm lē ‘abnēr wēkōh yosîp lô kî*

<sup>408</sup> The text of the MT does not actually give Ishbaal’s name here but it is assumed from the context. The LXX includes his name “Ishbaal son of Saul.”

<sup>409</sup> The verb *√bw* “go into, enter” is euphemistic for sexual intercourse.

<sup>410</sup> Reading with LXX. MT has *‘šr lyhdh* “which belongs to Judah” after *klb*, probably a later gloss by a scribe who read *klb* as the tribe “Caleb.” Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 106; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 53; Auld, *I and II Samuel*, 377. I take Abner’s calling himself a “dog’s head” to be a self-abasing insult.

<sup>411</sup> Lit. “today.”

<sup>412</sup> LXX has “I didn’t make peace with the House of David.”

<sup>413</sup> Reading *‘l* for MT’s *‘l*; see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 106.

*ka'āšer nišba' YHWH lēdāwid kî-kēn 'e'ēšeh lô lēha'ābîr hammamlākâ  
mibbêt šā'ûl ûlēhāqîm 'et-kissē' dāwid 'al yiśrā'ēl wē'al-yēhûdâ middān  
wē'ad-bē'ēr šāba'*

Abner certainly takes Ishba'al's question as an accusation, exclaiming that Ishba'al has charged him with an offense (*wattipqod 'ālay 'āwon*). However, though Ishba'al's accusation concerns Abner's sexual behavior, Abner's response focuses on political behavior, particularly his commitment to the house of Saul, as conveyed by the term *ḥesed* "loyalty."<sup>414</sup> Abner understands Ishba'al's accusation not in terms of sexual propriety<sup>415</sup> but in terms of political allegiance, and his response demonstrates that he sees himself as having been unwaveringly loyal to Saul's family, particularly Ishba'al.

Neither Abner nor the narrator addresses the veracity of Ishba'al's accusation, leaving his relationship with Rizpah entirely ambiguous. In fact, Abner seems to deem Ishba'al's question not worth answering directly. According to Abner's response, the sexual impropriety of which he stands accused is not significant enough to warrant attention or comment; yet, the political ramifications of such an accusation are certainly not lost on Abner. Hertzberg remarks that Abner "dismisses his conduct with Rizpah as a trivial affair which should not be held against a man of his stature."<sup>416</sup> However, the fact that it is a sexual accusation particularly seems to provoke Abner to anger. As we will see in section 6.2, sexual offenses seem to be particularly inflammatory and thus useful for provoking a fight.

---

<sup>414</sup> On the Hebrew term *ḥesed*, see Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Ḥesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula, Mo: Harvard Semitic Museum, 1978); G. R. Clark, *The Word Ḥesed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 157; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993); Harold M. Kamsler, "Ḥesed: Mercy or Loyalty?" *JBQ* 27 (1999): 183-185.

<sup>415</sup> Cf. McKenzie, *King David*, 117.

<sup>416</sup> Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 257.

After Abner boldly declares treason, Ishba‘al (2 Sam 3:11) “was unable to say anything else to Abner because he was afraid of him” (*wělw̄ -yākol ‘ôd lēhāšīb ’et-’abnēr dābār miyyir’ātô ’otô*). Although Ishba‘al makes an accusation against Abner for sexual misconduct, he does nothing in the face of Abner’s overt treachery. This episode reveals Ishba‘al’s character as weak and inept, someone unfit for kingship, especially competing against David as an alternative.

There are two possible interpretations to Ishba‘al’s accusation: the first is that Abner is innocent of any sexual offense concerning Rizpah and his response shows his righteous indignation; or, he is indeed guilty and his response is false indignation. Of the two, I am inclined to think that the writer, who is pro-David, would have in mind an innocent Abner and a foolish Ishba‘al, both of which augment the portrait of David in the narrative. The main purpose of the episode, however, is to move a previously Saulide Abner into David’s camp. The story of Ishba‘al’s accusation of Abner is a literary ploy to show that David has nothing to do with Abner’s defection but instead Abner is forced to change sides when the weak king Ishba‘al accuses him (falsely) of a sexual offense. Thus Abner voluntarily approaches David, not the other way around. Moreover, David has nothing to do with Abner’s sudden change of heart; rather, it is because Ishba‘al has alienated Abner. Ultimately, however, Abner’s alliance with David is the cause of his own demise and the end of the Saulide dynasty over Israel.

#### *A Bid for the Throne?*

The prevailing interpretation among scholars is that Ishba‘al is accusing Abner of making a bid for the throne by having sexual relations with Rizpah. This viewpoint posits a cultural convention in ancient Israel whereby sexually taking a woman who

belonged to the ruler was tantamount to challenging the kingship. Thus one encounters the following kinds of statements in the secondary literature: “through the carnal knowledge of a suzerain’s harem a man could lay claim to suzerainty himself was a custom apparently well founded in Israel;”<sup>417</sup> “a violation of the royal harem was...tantamount to a public declaration of pretension to the throne;”<sup>418</sup> or “an important principle about monarchy...surfaces repeatedly in the David story, namely that sleeping with a member of the royal harem is tantamount to staking a claim on the throne.”<sup>419</sup> This perspective often results in grouping 2 Samuel 3:6-11 with Adonijah’s request for marriage to Abishag in 1 Kings 2:13-25, Absalom’s appropriation of David’s *pīlagšīm* in 2 Samuel 16:20-23, and sometimes also Nathan’s statement to David in 2 Samuel 12:8 that Yahweh had given Saul’s women over to David when he became king.<sup>420</sup>

However, Ken Stone has critiqued the prevailing view that 2 Samuel 3:6-11, 16:20-23 and 1 Kings 2:13-25 recount bids for the throne. He agrees that these three stories all concern kingship and sexual access to women who have been consorts to kings, but he questions the extent to which two of these texts exhibit a direct connection

---

<sup>417</sup> Jon Levenson and Baruch Halpern, “Political Import of David’s Wives,” 508.

<sup>418</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, 112-113.

<sup>419</sup> McKenzie, *King David*, 117.

<sup>420</sup> For further examples of this viewpoint, see Matitahu Tsevat, “Marriage and Monarchical Legitimacy in Ugarit and Israel,” *JSS* 3 (1958): 241: “the marriage of a former king’s wife bestows legitimacy on an aspirant who otherwise has no sufficient claim to the throne;” Tomoo Ishida, *Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, 74: “evidence of monarchical legitimacy acquired by taking previous king’s harem;” Jon Levenson, “1 Samuel 25,” 27: Saul “deprived David of Michal when David asserted his right to the throne through marriage with Ahinoam;” Regina Schwartz, “Adultery in the House of David,” 52, n.11: “the act is clearly a sign of pretention to the throne, for the competition over who will succeed Saul—his son or his general—is fought out over sexual ownership of the concubine;” Jo Ann Hackett, “1 and 2 Samuel,” 99: “Perhaps because a king’s wives and concubines were such a symbol of his political connections and authority, a usurper often manifested his displacing of a reigning king by sleeping with members of the king’s harem. To claim a king’s harem was tantamount to claiming his throne;” Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 29: “relations with royal concubines in Samuel represent a claim on the throne.”

between sexual contact with a royal consort and a political attempt on the throne. In 2 Samuel 3:6-11 it does not seem that Abner has any desire to usurp the kingship of Israel. He is, after all, the very person who has established Ishba'al as king and his response to Ishba'al's accusation only involves changing allegiance to David, not taking Ishba'al's throne.<sup>421</sup> Moreover, Stone points out that although Adonijah has aspirations of becoming king in 1 Kings 1, he is too weak politically in 1 Kgs 2:13-25 for an attempt on the throne, so this is most likely not his objective when requesting marriage to Abishag (see section 5.4 below).<sup>422</sup> I concur with Stone's arguments about 2 Samuel 3:6-11 and 1 Kings 2:13-15. Furthermore, I believe that while Absalom certainly does want to usurp the throne from David in 2 Samuel 16:20-23, he attempts this by declaring himself king in Hebron (2 Sam 15:10) and ousting David from Jerusalem (2 Sam 15:13-16) (see section 6.2). His takeover of David's *pīlagšīm* is not a pretension to the throne—he has already accomplished this objective.

Using anthropological models, Stone offers a modified interpretation of these passages. He argues that all three of these texts are primarily concerned with gender-based systems of prestige. Regarding 2 Samuel 3:6-11 specifically, Stone suggests that since men were responsible for the sexual purity of the women of their households, Rizpah, as the *pīlegeš* of the previous king, would have been among the women upon whom Ishba'al's honor depended.<sup>423</sup> Thus, Stone concludes that “by giving himself sexual access to Rizpah, apparently without consulting Ishba'al...Abner can be

---

<sup>421</sup> Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 89-90.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 128, 131.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

interpreted as having potentially challenged the honor and power of Ishba‘al.”<sup>424</sup>

Building upon Stone’s argument, if *pīlagšūt* seems to have been a “second-tier” type of marriage, as discussed above, it would seem a rather poor strategy to assert a claim on the throne via a sexual liaison with a *pīlegeš* instead of a wife.<sup>425</sup> However, if the goal of sexual possession of one of the king’s women is to prove the weakness of that king, then such strategy makes more sense. Someone willing to insult the masculine honor of the king is likely motivated to depose that king.

Ultimately, both Stone’s and earlier views of these texts underscore the connection between sexuality and kingship in the David Narrative but with different emphases.<sup>426</sup> I have been influenced by both models. As I have discussed in chapter 3, strategic marriages can be a way for a man to accrue power and prestige, as exemplified by the accounts of David’s marriages during his rise to power. However, from these narratives, we can also infer that the consorts of the king also present a point of vulnerability for a reigning king.<sup>427</sup> Three different kings—Ishba‘al (2 Sam 3:6-11); David (2 Sam 16:20-23); and Solomon (1 Kgs 2:13-25)—are faced with challenges to their authority regarding sexual access to their consorts, and it is no coincidence that all three of these episodes are set during periods of political instability. As will be underscored in the discussions of 1 Kings 2:13-25 and 2 Samuel 16:20-23 below, control

---

<sup>424</sup> Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 91.

<sup>425</sup> Strangely, none of these stories involve sexual possession of a “first-tier” wife (*’iššā*) of a king, only *pīlagšīm* and a *sokenet* (for this term see below, section 5.4).

<sup>426</sup> Though Stone presents his argument in *Sex, Honor, and Power* in opposition to the “bid for the throne” interpretations, his current view is that the two positions are actually quite similar (personal communication, July, 2013).

<sup>427</sup> The Middle-Assyrian palace decrees, especially those of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BCE), demonstrate insecurity about access to the “palace women.” See Roth, *Law Collections*, 195-209.



over sexual access to the consorts of the king is a point of insecurity in the royal ideology of the David Narrative.

*Aftermath: 2 Samuel 3:12-16*

Abner makes good on his threat to Ishba'al and reaches out to make an alliance with David, promising that he can deliver all of Israel into David's power (2 Sam 3:12). David, however, refuses Abner an audience unless he brings Michal, Saul's daughter and David's former wife, with him (2 Sam 3:13), and Abner ultimately fulfills this request (2 Sam 3:16). In the meantime, David also brings a legal suit to Ishba'al demanding that Michal be restored to him as his wife (2 Sam 3:14-15), even though she is married to Paltiel (see section 3.2.2). Both of the women referenced in this episode, Rizpah and Michal, function specifically in terms of the power negotiations between the male characters.<sup>428</sup> Ishba'al sees Abner's alleged sexual liaison with Rizpah as undermining his authority, whereas Abner views Ishba'al's question as insulting and therefore shifts his power to David. David utilizes the opportunity presented to him to re-marry Michal, the daughter of Saul, and he is eventually able to capitalize upon this alliance with the House of Saul when he becomes king over Israel, after the assassinations of Abner and Ishba'al. Thus an episode that begins with an accusation of illicit sexual relations ends with a demand for the restoration of a marriage. Questions of sexual access to a king's *pīlegeš* and a king's daughter (and sister) are critically embedded in the narrative portrayal of the end of the House of Saul and David's ascendancy over Israel.

---

<sup>428</sup> See also Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 87.

### 5.3. *Michal against David: 2 Samuel 6:16; 20-23*

This brief episode recounts a dispute between David and his wife Michal that intertwines issues of sexuality, kingship, and cult. Michal publicly derides David for his actions in a cultic procession moving the Ark of Yahweh to Jerusalem, suggesting that he has behaved in a way that is sexually inappropriate (2 Sam 6:20).<sup>429</sup> In David's rejoinder to Michal, he defends his ritual behavior as evidence of his Yahwistic piety and points out that Yahweh has chosen him as king over Michal's father Saul and over the other men of Saul's house (2 Sam 6:21-22). Then, the narrative provides the information that Michal has no offspring at the time of her death (2 Sam 6:23). Of the various stories involving Michal within the David Narrative, this is the only dialogue that occurs between them.<sup>430</sup> Since Michal objects to David's actions during the cultic procession bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, it is worth discussing the description of this event to help determine what she finds offensive.

#### *David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem: 2 Samuel 6:1-19*

At this point in the David Narrative, David has consolidated his power over Judah and also Israel in the wake of the deaths of Saul and his sons Jonathan and Ishba'al (2 Sam 2:1-5:5). David has also conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and has established his capital there (2 Sam 5:6-12). The dispute between Michal and David

---

<sup>429</sup> With several others, I tend to regard 2 Samuel 6:16; 20-23 as an addition to a previously-existing account of David's transfer of the ark, but I do not find this point to be critical. Cf. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 277; Gunn, *King David*, 74; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 188-189; Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 369; For the view that 2 Samuel 6 as a single compositional unit, see Weiser, *Legitimation*, 344; Klein, *2 Samuel*, 99. Rost, *Succession*, 33-34, regarded the Michal section in 2 Samuel 6 as the beginning of the Succession Narrative.

<sup>430</sup> In 1 Samuel 19:11 Michal warns David that Saul plans to kill him, but David does not speak.

occurs after David moves the Ark of Yahweh to this new capital (2 Sam 6:12-19).<sup>431</sup>

David presumably brings the Ark from Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam 7:1), where it has resided since before Saul became king.<sup>432</sup> Moving the Ark has proven to be a dangerous venture—David has already tried to transfer it to Jerusalem once before. However, as it is being moved, one of the bearers of the Ark, Uzzah, reaches out to steady it and when he touches the Ark, Yahweh strikes him dead (2 Sam 6:6-8). At this point, David aborts the effort to bring the Ark to Jerusalem and places it temporarily in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite (2 Sam 6:9-10).

However, when David learns that Obed-edom and his household have been blessed since the Ark has resided with them, David decides to make another attempt to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. This second cultic procession of the Ark of Yahweh particularly highlights David's role in the cultic procession (2 Sam 6:13-15):

When those bearing the Ark of Yahweh moved forward six paces, he sacrificed a fattened bull.<sup>433</sup> David whirled with all of his might<sup>434</sup> before

---

<sup>431</sup> Mowinckel (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols. (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; New York: Abingdon, 1967) has supposed that 2 Samuel 6 reflects an annual cult festival. Cf. Kraus, *Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im Alten Testament* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 13; Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), 27-35; idem, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (trans. G. Buswell; Richmond, Va: John Knox, 1966), 183-185; Porter, "The Interpretation of 2 Samuel vi and Psalm cxxxii," *JTS* 5 (1954): 172-173; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 79-111. Miller and Roberts, (*The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel* [Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977]) argue that the Ark narrative is similar to the capture and return of divine images. McCarter (*II Samuel*, 178-182) argues that 2 Samuel 6 "can be compared to other ancient Near Eastern accounts of the introduction of a national god to a new royal city" (181) and he is followed by Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 333-337. I also agree with this view.

<sup>432</sup> The Ark comes to Kiriath-jearim after the Philistines send it out of their territory. The Philistines had captured the ark in battle, whereupon it afflicts the Philistine cities with a plague (1 Sam 6). Previous to this the ark had been kept at Shiloh (1 Sam 3:3).

<sup>433</sup> Literally "a bull and a fatling," probably a hendiadys. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 166.

<sup>434</sup> Tentatively reading with the MT. LXX's *anakroueto* reflects *bkly* 'z "with loud/sonorous instruments;" cf. 2 Sam 6:5. See the discussion of David P. Wright ("Music and Dance 2 Samuel 6," *JBL* 121 [2002]: 219-221) who argues that Michal's objection does not have anything to do with music but dancing, which the adverbial phrase "before Yahweh" here seems to presuppose, and he also points out the further difficulty of having to emend the LXX reading to a singular instrument. However, McCarter, *II Samuel*

Yahweh; and David was clad with a linen ephod. Thus David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of Yahweh with shouts and with blasts of the horn.

*wayēhî kî šā ‘ādû nōšē ‘ē ‘ārôn-YHWH šišā šē ‘ādîm wayyizbaḥ šôr ûmēri’  
wēdāwid mēkarkēr bēkol- ‘ōz lipnē YHWH wēdāwid ḥāgûr ‘ēpôd bād  
wēdāwid wēkol-bēt yiśrā ‘ēl ma ‘ālîm ‘et- ‘ārôn YHWH bitrû ‘ā ûbqôl šôpār*

Some discussion surrounds the appropriate way to translate the verb *mkrkr* in the above passage. I understand David to be performing a type of whirling dance (*mkrkr*), so the phrase “with all his might” makes considerable sense here considering the strength and stamina required for such an endeavor.<sup>435</sup> It seems that in the ancient Near East generally, whirling dances were associated with male dancers, as were dances that involved jumping, skipping, or acrobatics.<sup>436</sup>

Music and dance were often part of cultic celebrations in the ancient Near East, particularly at religious festivals, and temples even staffed professional musicians and dancers.<sup>437</sup> Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible dancing is also related to ritual, as seen in the examples of the golden calf episode (Exod 32:19), the festival at Shiloh (Judg 21:21), and the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Ba‘al (1 Kgs 18:26). Regarding 2 Samuel

---

171, argues that the MT is *lectio facilior* and suggests that *mkrkr* describes the activity of the fingers, following studies of the verb in Ugaritic by Avishur (“*Krkr* in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic,” *VT* 26 [1976]: 257-261) and Ahlström (“*krkr* and *tpd*,” *VT* 28 [1978]: 100-102). See also Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 409. There are iconographic depictions of musicians that appear to be playing an instrument while also dancing, such as the “Dancer from Dan” (see Avraham Biran, “The Dancer from Dan,” *NEA* 66 [2003]: 128-132).

<sup>435</sup> See David P. Wright, “Music and Dance,” 201-225.

<sup>436</sup> Anne Kilmer, “Music and Dance in Western Asia,” *CANE* IV: 2601-2615; Tal Ilan, “Dance and Gender in Ancient Jewish Sources,” *NEA* 66 (2003): 136; Piotr Bienkowski, “Dance,” in *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East* (eds. idem and Alan R. Millard; London: British Museum, 2000), 88.

<sup>437</sup> See Bienkowski, “Dance,” 88; Kilmer, “Music and Dance,” 2610; Stefano de Martino, “Music, Dance, and Processions in Hittite Anatolia,” *CANE* IV: 2661-2667, esp. 2666-2667; Patricia Spencer, “Dance in Ancient Egypt,” *NEA* 66 (2003): 116; Uri Gabbay, “Dance in Textual Sources from Ancient Mesopotamia,” *NEA* 66 (2003): 104.

6, Richard Hess suggests that “intense music and dancing may function to call Yahweh’s attention to David and to look favorably on his action,”<sup>438</sup> similar to the sacrifice of a bull every six paces. After the disaster with Uzzah, David is understandably taking every precaution to ensure Yahweh’s blessing on the passage of the Ark. Moreover, in Israel, as well as the ancient Near East, kings also served as major, if not the highest, cultic officiants.<sup>439</sup> Indeed, in addition to dancing, David performs the sacrifices and distributes food to the people. Therefore, as David is both the decision-maker and the focus of the narrative description of the procession, we can probably infer that David was the leader of the procession of the Ark into Jerusalem.

The garment David is wearing during the procession, a “linen ephod” (*’ēpôd bād*), is specifically mentioned in the description of the cultic procession. Because David is “girded” (*hāgûr*) with the ephod, it would appear that this garment is not the ornate vestment described by Priestly texts as being worn by the High Priest (Exod 25:7; 28:4, 6, 12, 15, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31; 29:5; 35:9, 27; 39:2, 7, 8, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22; Lev 8:7).<sup>440</sup> There is another biblical example of a person described as wearing a linen ephod and it also involves cultic personnel associated with the Ark of Yahweh. In 1 Samuel 2:18, the young Samuel is “girded with a linen ephod” (*hāgûr ’ēpôd bād*) and serves as part of the

---

<sup>438</sup> Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 229.

<sup>439</sup> See John Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship: Official Forms, Rhetoric, Context,” John Day, “The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy,” and Deborah W. Rooke, “Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy,” all in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; JSOT Sup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic press, 1998) 16-53; Bernard M. Levinson, “The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History’s Transformation of Torah,” *VT* 51 (2001): 511-534; Harry A. Hoffner, “The Royal Cult in Hatti,” Jacob Klein, “Sumerian Kingship and the Gods,” Peter Machinist, “Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria,” and Ziony Zevit, “Israel’s Royal Cult and the Ancient Near Eastern *Kulturkreis*,” all in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion* (eds. G. Beckman and T. J. Lewis; Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006).

<sup>440</sup> The material used for the ephod in the Priestly texts is *šēš* whereas in 2 Samuel 6 the material is *bād*.

personnel of the temple at Shiloh (*měšārēt 'et-pěně YHWH na 'ar*), where the Ark resided at the time (1 Sam 3:3). Both Samuel and David wear the same type of garment while engaged in ritual activities. Though not explicit, since the Ark is in Shiloh according to 1 Samuel 3:3, it is possible to understand Samuel's "ministering before Yahweh" to include cultic activities involving the Ark. If this is the case, then both Samuel and David wear the same type of garment to perform cultic activities in connection with the same divine symbol, the Ark of Yahweh. From these examples, it seems that the linen ephod is a cultic garment.<sup>441</sup> There might have been different types of ephod garments with different gradations of holiness. From the term "gird" (*hāgûr*), it seems that the garment was a type of loincloth or skirt tied around the waist.<sup>442</sup> Potentially this is all David is wearing, as such a garment would allow freedom of movement for dancing, and, as we shall see, Michal's comments suggest that he is scantily clad.

*Michal at the Window: 2 Samuel 6:16*

As Michal watches the procession of the Ark, she does not like what she sees (2 Sam 6:16): "As the Ark entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, was watching through a window and when she saw King David leaping and whirling before Yahweh, she felt contempt for him" (*wěhāyāh 'ārôn YHWH bā' 'ir dāwid ûmîkal bat-šā'ûl nišqěpā bě'ad haḥallôn wattēre' 'et-hammelek dāwid mēpazzēz ûmēkarkēr lipnē YHWH wattibez lô bělibbāh*). Michal's contempt seems directly related to David's

---

<sup>441</sup> Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 171; see also N. L. Tidwell, "The Linen Ephod," *VT* 24 (1974): 505-507; A. Phillips, "David's Linen Ephod," *VT* 19 (1969): 485-487.

<sup>442</sup> Tidwell, "Linen Ephod," 506-507, makes an analogy with Egyptian ceremonial dress.

physical activity, as the text again mentions his “whirling” (*měkarkēr*) and also adds “leaping” or “jumping” (*měpazzēz*), which is also probably a type of dance.<sup>443</sup>

The motif of a watcher in a window occurs in other biblical texts (Judg 5:28; 2 Kgs 9:30; Prov 9:7; Song 2:9). In Judges 5:28 and 2 Kings 9:30 it is a woman who watches from a window.<sup>444</sup> Images of women peering out of a window are also attested in ancient Near Eastern iconography (ivory plaques from Samaria, Arslan Tash, Nimrud, and Khorsabad), but their connection with the biblical literary motif is unclear.<sup>445</sup> In the two other biblical examples of a woman looking out a window, both part of DtrH, the women are high-level members of ruling parties that have been supplanted. The end of the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:28-30) imagines the mother of Sisera, head of the army for the Canaanite city-state of Hazor, wondering why her son is so long in returning from battle against the Israelites, when the audience knows that he has been slain—by a woman, no less. In 2 Kings 9:30-33 Jezebel peers out the window to see the usurper Jehu enter her city and calls out to him, calling him a murderer. Jehu responds by commanding anyone who supports him to push Jezebel out of the window to her death. Don Seeman has argued that the biblical window motif “convey[s] messages about the political and ideological oppositions between kin-based groups.”<sup>446</sup> Specifically

---

<sup>443</sup> The root  $\sqrt{pzz}$  has cognates in Syriac (*paz*, *pazzīzā*) and Arabic (*fazza*) that suggest leaping or quick movements. See Wright, “Music and Dance,” 221.

<sup>444</sup> In Proverbs 9:7 and Song of Songs 2:9, the watcher is male.

<sup>445</sup> Unfortunately, these examples have often been connected to cultic use, and then compared to the biblical text from this perspective, and, with others, I agree that this is an overreach of the comparative method. Cf. also M. O’Connor, “The Women in the Book of Judges,” *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 277-93; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 172; Mordecai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, Anchor Bible 11 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988), 111; Don Seeman, “The Watcher at the Window: Cultural Poetics of a Biblical Motif,” *Prooftexts* 24 (2004): 23-24.

<sup>446</sup> Seeman, “Watcher,” 2.

regarding the gazes of the female watchers, he finds that the motif “serves to focalize the downfall of despised regimes or kin groups, and the inability of those kin groups to act decisively in self-defense.”<sup>447</sup> It is as a member of the House of Saul that Michal looks upon David’s ultimate moment of triumph—king over Israel and Judah and bringing the Ark of Yahweh to his new capital of Jerusalem. Michal represents the former regime that has now been supplanted by David, but she refuses to exit the narrative quietly.

*David and Michal’s War of Words: 2 Samuel 6:20-22*

After David finishes sacrificing and blessing the people (2 Sam 6:17-19), he returns to his home to greet his household, and Michal comes out to meet him, saying (2 Sam 6:20): “How the king of Israel has ‘honored’ himself today, exposing himself today in the sight his subjects’ servant girls, as some dancer might expose himself!” (*mahnikbad hayyôm melek yišrā’ēl ’āšer niglâ hayyôm lē’ênê ’amhôt ’ābādāyw kēhiggālôt niglôt ’aḥad hāroqdīm*<sup>448</sup>). Michal makes what appears to be a sexually-charged admonishment of David, accusing him of indecent exposure in front of other women, the “slavegirls” of David’s servants. Though the Hebrew term *√glh* can mean “expose” or “reveal” in general, in several instances it is connected with the shameful exposing of the sexual organs (Gen 9:21; Ex 20:26; Isa 47:3; Ezek 16:36, 57; 23:29). Indeed, the root *√glh* can also be part of euphemistic phrases for sexual intercourse, always in a negative context (Lev 18:6-19; 20:11-21; Deut 23:1, 27:20; Ezek 22:10). From Michal’s use of *√glh*, she seems to accuse David of indecently exposing himself and of behaving in a

---

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>448</sup> Reading with LXX (*tōn orchoumenōn*) which reflects *hrqdyṃ* instead of MT’s *hrqym*. As Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 409, asks, “Has a more original *hrqdyṃ* been expanded into the “dancers” expected from the wider context? Or has an original *hrqdyṃ* been moralized into ‘empty’ or ‘vain’?” Since, as I understand it, the focus of the text’s description of David’s actions in the cultic procession has emphasized his dancing, this leads me to follow LXX here.



sexually shameful manner. From Michal's perspective, David does not appear honored but vulgar. Michal certainly does not think David behaved appropriately for a king, as she sarcastically states that he "honored" himself when she means the exact opposite. To this end, her words have a thoroughly aristocratic character: she refers to David's subjects as his "servants" and the women as "servant girls" to his "servants." She intends to disparage him by saying that it is the lowly servant-girls who glimpse the body of the king.

Considering that the ephod David is wearing is "girded" around him and that he is "whirling" and "leaping" in the procession of the Ark, it is imaginable that he could have indeed exposed his genitals. While the linen ephod presumably would have provided adequate coverage normally, it might not have withstood acrobatic dance moves. Elsewhere in the ancient Near East, dancers are sometimes depicted in the nude or in very little clothing, possibly so that they were able to perform the dance movements.<sup>449</sup> To give Michal's complaint some support, dancing does seem to have had some association with eroticism in the ancient Near East. Men and women danced separately;<sup>450</sup> moreover, men would watch women while they danced and *vice versa*.<sup>451</sup> However, the association of dance to sexuality need not have affected its cultic function. Indeed, there

---

<sup>449</sup> See Stefano de Martino, "Music, Dance, and Cultic Processions in Hittite Anatolia," *CANE* IV, 2661-2667; Bienkowski, "Dance," 88; Spencer, "Dance in Ancient Egypt," 117-118; Amihai Mazar, "Ritual Dancing," *NEA* 66 (2003): 127; Dominique Collon, "Dance in Ancient Mesopotamia," *NEA* 66 (2003): 97-102.

<sup>450</sup> According to Ilan, "The biblical and rabbinic evidence together suggest that in ancient Israel dance was a highly gendered activity. Men danced with men (*rqd*) and women danced with women (*hwl*). It is very unlikely, in light of this evidence, that mixed dancing ever occurred. Yet it is equally suggestive that dancing had highly sexual overtones to it. It appears from all these traditions that women danced for men and men danced for women" ("Dance and Gender," 136). See too Gabbay, "Dance in Textual Sources," 103-104; Kilmer, "Music and Dance," 2610.

<sup>451</sup> Ilan, "Dance and Gender," 135-136; Piotr Bienkowski, "Dance," 88; Spencer, "Dance in Egypt," 115; Kilmer, "Music and Dance," 2610.

are a few examples of nakedness as a cultic activity elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: while searching to kill David, Saul encounters a band of prophets, and the spirit of God comes upon him, and he prophesies and strips naked (1 Sam 19:18-24); Isaiah is told by Yahweh to spend three years naked and barefoot as a sign-act to prophesy Assyria's successful invasion of Egypt (Isa 20); and the prophet Micah also mentions that he will go about naked as a portent of the coming destruction of Israel and Judah (Mic 1:8).

While on one level Michal's words are an accusation of sexual impropriety, they function on another level in the religious sphere. Michal's criticism of David might function similarly to the various examples of biblical writers metaphorically comparing religious and political practices they find inappropriate with sexual immorality, specifically adultery (e.g. Hos 1-3, 9:1-2; Isa 5; Jer 2-4; Ezek 16 & 23). In such passages, the exclusive worship Yahweh demands of Israel is figuratively compared to the expected sexual fidelity of a wife for her husband and religious apostasy is repeatedly cast as sexual infidelity, with Israel collectively personified as "whoring" after other gods. Thus Michal could disapprove of a certain religious or political aspect to the procession bringing the Ark to Jerusalem and frame her critique as sexually charged, picking on David's cultic dancing as a means of conveying her larger objection.

The Ark is mentioned only once in relation to Saul's reign, which might suggest it was not a main part of the cultic practices of Saul's regime. In the MT of 1 Samuel 14:18, Saul asks the priest Ahijah to bring him the "Ark of God" (*'ărôn hā'ēlōhîm*) during a battle and the text adds the note, "for the Ark of God was at the time among the Israelites" (*kî-hāyâ 'ărôn hā'ēlōhîm bayyôm hahû' ūbēnē yiśrā'ēl*), which is probably an attempt to explain the Ark's sudden reappearance in the larger narrative context.

However, the Septuagint reads “ephod” for “Ark;” moreover, earlier in the same episode Ahijah is with Saul and the Israelite warriors bearing an ephod (1 Sam 14:3).<sup>452</sup> Because of these reasons, a number of scholars read with LXX and understand Saul asking his priest for the ephod.<sup>453</sup> Such a reading suggests that the Ark was not a part of the Yahwistic worship of Saul’s rule, and this provides one possible interpretation of Michal’s criticism of David: she sees the Ark as an inappropriate cultic intrusion, and in a new, originally foreign, capital.<sup>454</sup> However, if the MT’s “Ark” is the correct reading, this would give a different nuance to Michal and David’s war of words. Opposite to the suggested emendation above, Karel van der Toorn has argued that the word “Ark” has been changed to “ephod” several times throughout the book of Samuel and concludes that once David becomes king over Israel, he takes over the main Saulide cult symbol.<sup>455</sup> If his argument is correct, then ostensibly Michal’s objection could relate to David’s taking over the cult symbol associated with her royal house or to his moving the Ark to Jerusalem. However, Michal’s complaint seems to have less to do with the Ark itself, which she does not specifically mention, than with the behavior in the cultic procession that accompanies the Ark to Jerusalem, which seems to be at the heart of her criticism against David.

While the sexual and religious components of Michal’s speech are fairly apparent, more implicit within her invective against David is a political challenge, and David

---

<sup>452</sup> So McCarter, *I Samuel*, 237; Klein, *I Samuel*, 132; however, Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 365-366, follows the MT. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 113-114, and Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 150-151, are undecided between MT and LXX.

<sup>453</sup> For example, McCarter, *I Samuel*, 237; Klein, *I Samuel*, 130, 132.

<sup>454</sup> See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 189; Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 292, n. 20.

<sup>455</sup> Karel van der Toorn, “David and the Ark,” *JBL* 113 (1994): 209-231.

clearly responds to this element of her statement to him. The sarcasm in Michal's statement hinges around David "honoring himself" (*nikbad*), by which of course she means the opposite, and this presents a picture of David as an illegitimate king unfit to rule. She speaks of David specifically as the "king of Israel," the territory over which her family, the "House of Saul," had previously exercised hegemony. Michal is identified throughout the episode by her patronymic "daughter of Saul" (*bat-šā'ûl*) rather than by her status as David's wife. Although Michal is often referred to by her patronymic, it is particularly significant that she is called "daughter of Saul" here, as the argument between Michal and David centers upon the transference of Saul's kingship to David. Furthermore, there is a public component to Michal's criticism of David. Michal "comes out," (*wattēšē*) in order "to meet" (*liqra't*) David as he arrives to bless his household at the end of the cultic procession (2 Sam 6:20). While not necessarily in front of the people at large (cf. 2 Sam 6:19), Michal's denigration of the king is intended for more ears than David's to hear.

However, according to portrayal given to us by the David Narrative, Michal's viewpoint is incorrect and her critique unfounded. David bluntly retorts to Michal's sarcastic comments (2 Sam 6:21-22):

I dance before Yahweh! Blessed is Yahweh, who chose me over your father and his entire house, appointing me ruler over the people of Yahweh, over Israel! So I'll revel before Yahweh, behaving even more shamelessly than this, and be lowly in your eyes! But as for the servant girls you mentioned, by them let me be honored!

*lipnê YHWH 'erqod bārûk YHWH<sup>456</sup> 'ăšer bāḥar-bî mē'ābîk ûmikkol-bêtô  
lēšawwot 'otî nāgîd 'al-'am YHWH 'al-yiśrā'ēl wēšîḥaqtî lipnê YHWH*

---

<sup>456</sup> Following LXX at the beginning of the verse since the MT seems to have suffered haplography. Cf. Wellhausen, *Bücher Samuelis*, 169; Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 277; Ackroyd, *Second Book of Samuel*, 71; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 185; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 98.

*ûnēqallotî<sup>457</sup> ‘ôd mizzō ‘t wēhāyiytî šāpāl bē ‘ênāyik<sup>458</sup> wē ‘im-hā ‘āmāhôt  
 ‘āšer ‘āmart ‘immām ‘ikkābēdā*

Michal’s statement generates a particularly heated and sharp-tongued response by David in his defense. David seems to understand Michal’s criticism is not really about sexual indecency, and he appropriately responds in terms of Yahwistic piety and kingship.

What seems like sexualized lewdness to Michal is actually David’s religious faithfulness, for he is willing to humble himself before Yahweh, even if it includes exposing himself as part of cultic dancing. David asserts that Michal has completely misunderstood—it is her interpretation that is indecent, not his cultic behavior.

David’s rebuttal to Michal is reminiscent of the narrative critique of Saul regarding cultic matters. This episode about Michal connects to those of the Saul narratives in 1 Samuel 13-15 in which Saul makes cultic blunders that cost him the kingship, but also 1 Sam 19 and 28 in which Saul participates in cultic activities presented negatively. David hints at this in his response by connecting his piety to Yahweh designating the kingship for him. In this episode, Michal clearly doesn’t understand or seeks to undermine the cultic import of the Ark procession. Like father, like daughter, it seems.

After David counters any possible religious critique, he then addresses the implicit political issues in Michal’s statement. David puts Michal in her place, politically speaking, by reminding her that Yahweh has chosen him over her father and indeed over all of the Saulides, making it clear to Michal that as part of a fallen house, she has no

---

<sup>457</sup> LXX’s *apokalypthēsomai* reflects *wnglyty* instead of *wnqlty*. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 186; Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 410.

<sup>458</sup> Following LXX, which has *en ophthalmois sou*, reflecting *b ‘ynyk* “in your eyes.” MT has *bē ‘ênāy* “my eyes,” with one mss showing *b ‘ynyw* “in his [i.e. Yahweh’s] eyes. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 186, argues that even though David is stressing his pious humility, ancient scribes, “fearful that the statement might be taken to mean ‘and lower myself in his opinion,’ tampered with the text.” This may well be correct, as “in my eyes” makes little sense and “in your eyes” could certainly be an example of *lectio facillior*.

place to criticize him. This is the only time this assertion is put on the lips of David. Though it has been a main focus of the David Narrative thus far, it has been spoken by members of Saul's house and retinue—by Saul himself, his son Jonathan, and his general Abner—as well as by Abigail. David puts into words what the events of the David Narrative have shown, that Saul's regime is no more and Saulides have no place in the Davidic reign. Only the last sentence of David's rebuttal indirectly addresses the sexual component of Michal's invective, but David inverts Michal's statement. Though she might find David undignified, the servant girls she mentions condescendingly will indeed hold him in high esteem as Yahweh's chosen ruler of Israel. David implies that he would prefer to be honored in the eyes of the lowly while in service to Yahweh as the chosen ruler than be honored by the royal Michal.

*Michal's Childlessness Revisited: 2 Samuel 6:23*

After David reproaches Michal the text immediately states in 2 Samuel 6:23 that “Michal, the daughter of Saul had no children until the day of her death” (*ûlēmīkal bat-šā'ûl lō'-hāyâ lāh yāled 'ad yôm môtāh*). While Michal regards David's behavior as shameful, the episode ends by implicitly referencing her shame of childlessness.<sup>459</sup> As ever, David's political calculations are covered up, and the blame for Michal's childlessness is placed on her impudence, not a strategic decision by David to ensure that Saul's line does not continue.<sup>460</sup> Even if this is not the case, however, Michal's final appearance in the David Narrative stands in stark contrast to her characterization in 1

---

<sup>459</sup> Cf. Auld, *I and II Samuel*, 415; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 107.

<sup>460</sup> 2 Samuel 6:23 could potentially be additional information which was attracted to the end of the episode because Michal does not appear in the narrative after this point. Thus David's reproach and Michal's childlessness might not have been connected originally. However, as the text stands Michal's childlessness seems like punishment for her insult to David, or at least explains why David would have stopped marital relations.

Samuel 18 and 19, where she “loves” David and saves his life by helping him escape from Saul. With this note, the David Narrative makes it clear that the House of Saul will not continue under David’s kingdom, and the episode immediately following is the prophecy of David’s everlasting dynasty. The House of Saul has ended and the House of David is now beginning.

Michal’s criticism of David in 2 Samuel 6:20-23 utilizes an accusation of sexual indecency to deprecate David as king and her censure of David’s potentially risqué dress in the procession of the Ark of Yahweh functions to draw attention to her implicit political critique. Strategically, Michal’s disparaging remarks are placed at the culmination of David’s accumulation of power, a final swan song for the House of Saul with the assurance that the Davidic dynasty does not continue Saul’s bloodline. The final episode in this chapter also takes place as a new king solidifies his rule—after David dies, Solomon assumes kingship over Israel and Judah and secures his kingship by eliminating political threats.

#### ***5.4. Solomon against Adonijah: 1 Kings 2:13-25***

In section 3.4.2, I discussed the account of Solomon’s succession to David’s throne over the claims of his half-brother Adonijah (1 Kgs 1). After Adonijah learns that David has made Solomon king, he grasps the horns of the altar until Solomon swears that he will not be put to death (1 Kgs 1:50-51). Solomon promises that no harm shall come to Adonijah as long as he “behaves worthily” (*yihyeh lēben-ḥayil*) but adds the caveat, “if he is caught in any offense, he shall die” (*wē’im-rā ‘ā timmāṣē’-bô wāmēt*) (1 Kgs 1:52), foreshadowing Adonijah’s demise in 1 Kings 2:13-25. Several key details in 1 Kings 13:13-25 are dependent upon the context of 1 Kings 1, suggesting that this episode was

meant to be read in light of the narrative of Solomon's accession in 1 Kings 1. Though Solomon allows Adonijah to live in response to his public plea, there is hardly a full truce between the two sons of David. Adonijah is granted life on probation, as, from Solomon's perspective, he represents a threat to his kingship. In 1 Kings 2:13-25 Solomon does find offense in Adonijah and orders his immediate execution. Adonijah has requested marriage to Abishag, the beautiful young woman who had been procured to keep King David "warm" (*hmm*) in his old age (1 Kgs 1:1-4), but Solomon responds to his marriage request by suspecting that he has designs on the throne. Adonijah's execution is Solomon's first reported act as king after David's death.

*Adonijah's Audience with Bathsheba: 1 Kings 2:13-18*

Adonijah does not present his request to Solomon directly but rather communicates it via Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. When Adonijah comes to see Bathsheba, her first question to Adonijah is if he comes in peace (*watto'mer hăšālôm bo'ekā*), indicating that tensions still exist and that Bathsheba still feels threatened by Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:13).<sup>461</sup> When Adonijah responds that he does come in peace, however, Bathsheba agrees to hear his request (1 Kgs 2:14). Adonijah begins his audience with Bathsheba by saying (1 Kgs 2:15): "You surely know that the kingship was rightly mine and that all Israel expected me to reign. However, the kingship changed and became my brother's, for Yahweh willed it for him. And now I have one request to make of you; don't refuse me" (*'att yāda 't kî-lî hāyētâ hammēlûkâ wě'ālay sāmû kol-yiśrā'ēl pēnēhem limlok wattissob hammēlûkâ wattēhî lē'āhî kî mēYHWH hāyētâ lô*). In his opening clause, Adonijah asserts that he had the rightful claim to the throne and that

---

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Cogan, *1 Kings*, 174.



Bathsheba herself likely knows this to be true, perhaps insinuating her crucial involvement in Solomon's succession. Bathsheba never challenges his assertion, and neither does the narrative. If Adonijah's opening statement seems somewhat audacious, however, he quickly softens his rhetoric and adds that the kingship became his brother's by divine will.<sup>462</sup> By this statement, Adonijah effectively disavows any claims he might have to the throne.

Bathsheba tells Adonijah to continue to make his request, and he states (1 Kgs 2:17): "Please say to King Solomon—for he will not refuse you—that he should give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife" (*'imrî-nā' lišlomōh hammelek kî lō'-yāšīb 'et-pānāyik wēyitten-lî 'et-'ābīšag haššūnammît lē'iššā*). The episode does not explain or reintroduce Abishag but instead is dependent upon the brief discussion of her in 1 Kings 1:1-4, 14. There she is called a *sokenet* (1 Kgs 1:2, 4), the only female usage of a term that in Hebrew, as well as other Semitic languages, usually designates a high-level government official.<sup>463</sup> Though David does not have sexual intercourse with Abishag (1 Kgs 1:4), as discussed in section 3.4.2, it seems that this was her intended purpose. Abishag's physical attractiveness is emphasized (1 Kgs 1:4), she "lies with" (*√škb*) David, a common euphemism for sexual relations, and Solomon becomes irate at the prospect of allowing Adonijah to marry her. The narrative does not mention why Adonijah wants Abishag for his wife and the reader is left to guess at his motives. As in 2 Samuel 3:6-11, it seems that the successor to the throne assumes authority and responsibility over the

---

<sup>462</sup> Adonijah speaks of the kingship as an active subject which had "changed direction" (*wattissob hammēlūkā*) from him to Solomon.

<sup>463</sup> Cf. Isaiah 22:15. Cognates include Ugaritic *skn* "governor, prefect," Akkadan *sākinu* "high government official." See also *sūkinu*, a Canaanite gloss on *rābišu* "commissioner" in the Amarna Letters. See *HALOT*, 755.

consorts of his predecessor. This is also true for Abishag even though 1 Kings 1:4 overtly states that David does not have sexual relations with her.

Adonijah's entire statement is intended to be persuasive, bringing up his disappointed hopes of being king as a method of evoking sympathy and framing his request for Abishag as non-threatening. The prince conveys that because his aspirations of kingship have been thwarted he deserves a favor.<sup>464</sup> Adonijah's assertion that Solomon "will not refuse you" (lit. "he will not turn away your face") could either refer to Bathsheba being Solomon's mother or the fact that she helped her son succeed the throne, probably both. This statement is ironic because this is of course what happens: Solomon does refuse Bathsheba's request on behalf of Adonijah and has him killed for merely raising the question. This phrase will be repeated twice more in the dialogue between Bathsheba and Solomon, foreshadowing Adonijah's end. Bathsheba promises Adonijah that she will make his request and then goes before King Solomon (1 Kgs 2:18). Ambiguity also surrounds Bathsheba, as in 1 Kgs 1—does she go gleefully to tell Solomon, realizing that Adonijah's request is a way to eliminate him as a threat, or does she find his request reasonable?

*Bathsheba's Audience with Solomon: 1 Kings 2:19-22*

In this episode, two different women serve as conduits for the power relations between the same two men. On a representational level, Abishag is the medium by which the power relations between Adonijah and Solomon are ultimately decided. She is the object of Adonijah's marriage request, which Solomon interprets as a threat to his

---

<sup>464</sup> Baruch Halpern notes that Abishag is "a sort of consolation prize for losing the throne to Solomon" (*David's Secret Demons*, 29). However, see Cogan, *1 Kings*, 176. Adonijah's speech could suggest this kind of interpretation, but his description of losing the succession to Solomon appears to be a rhetorical strategy to get Bathsheba to hear his request, not an argument for attaining Abishag.

kingship and a reason to put Adonijah to death. Within the action of the narrative, however, it is Bathsheba who mediates between Adonijah and Solomon; she is Adonijah's messenger but Solomon's mother as well as the key figure in orchestrating Solomon's coronation (1 Kgs 1:11-21, 28-31). In 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, Bathsheba has a similar role to Abishag as a passive sexual object, but in 1 Kings 1-2 she plays a pivotal role both in the naming of Solomon as successor over Adonijah and in removing Adonijah as a threat. However, Bathsheba still functions as an instrument for the negotiation of political hegemony in 1 Kings 2, though through discourse rather than intercourse.

During Bathsheba's audience with the king, Solomon is depicted as treating his mother with a high level of respect (1 Kgs 2:19): "The king rose to greet her [Bathsheba] and bowed down to her. He sat on his throne and he had a throne placed for the mother of the king, and she sat on his right" (*wayyāqom hammelek liqrā'tāh wayyištahû lāh wayyēšeb 'al-kis'ô wayyāšem kissē' lē'ēm hammelek wattēšeb lîmînô*). Solomon greets his mother with respect, bowing before her, a gesture usually made before superiors (see section on 1 Sam 25), not by them. However, as his mother, Bathsheba commands a certain level of superiority even to the king. Solomon also accords Bathsheba the seat of honor on his right-hand side.<sup>465</sup> All three modes of communication, language, ritual (body language), and spatial, indicate that mother and son have a close relationship. Considering that this episode often assumes information related in 1 Kings 1, we can probably interpret Solomon's genuflection toward Bathsheba as something more than the

---

<sup>465</sup> The term *gēbîrâ* is never applied to Bathsheba, so I see Solomon's high regard for her as a result of her personality and their relationship rather than a hypothesized institution. See also Zafira Ben-Barak, "The Status and Right of the *Gēbîrâ*," *JBL* 110 (1991): 23-34; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 176.

respect of a son for his mother and imagine that Solomon is aware of Bathsheba's critical part in his succession to David's throne.

Despite the initially formal gestures, however, diplomatic language is not present in the dialogue between Bathsheba and Solomon, which contrasts with Bathsheba's audience with David in 1 Kings 1. The simpler discourse in this chapter perhaps suggests a more intimate discussion between mother and son. Bathsheba says to Solomon (1 Kgs 2:20), "I have one small request to make of you, do not refuse me" (*šē'ēlā 'aḥat qeṭannā 'ānōkī šo'elet mē'ittāk 'al-tāšeb 'et-pānāy*) and he responds, "Ask, Mother; I shall not refuse you" (*ša'ālī 'immī kī lō' -'āšīb 'et-pānāyik*). Again, we see ironic foreshadowing in the language of "don't refuse me" and the promise not to refuse the request. Also, Bathsheba adds that she is making one "small" request, which is probably another deliberate irony since the request is significant enough to warrant Adonijah's execution.

Bathsheba then presents Adonijah's request (1 Kgs 2:21): "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah" (*yuttan 'et-'ābīšag haššunammīt la'ādōnīyāhū 'āhikā lē'iššā*). As promised, Bathsheba presents Adonijah's request, and she words it exactly as he presented it to her. Again, the episode is fraught with ambiguity, particularly regarding Bathsheba's role. Either she finds Adonijah's request reasonable and dutifully fulfills her promise to him, or she agrees to speak on Adonijah's behalf because she sees the opportunity to eliminate Adonijah. In the 1 Kings 1 account there are a few clues that imply a level of conspiracy in Solomon's succession, but this episode is less suggestive. As the narrative presents it, Bathsheba does not seem to find Adonijah's request offensive, and her response highly contrasts that of her son.

Despite his promise to grant his mother's request, Solomon responds (1 Kgs 2:22), "Why request Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Request the kingship for him! For he is my older brother, and the priest Abiathar and Joab son of Zeruiah<sup>466</sup> are on his side" (*lāmā 'att šō 'elet 'et- 'ābīšag haššunammît la 'ādōnîyāhû wēša 'ālî-lô 'et- hammēlūkâ kî hû' 'āhî haggādōl mimmennî wēlô ûlē'ebyātār hakkōhēn ûlēyô 'āb ben-šērûyāh*). Solomon's indignant response is directed at his mother, which suggests that he is frustrated with her for not seeing the problem. A reader might well imagine that she spoke with an ironic tone or that the audience has been choreographed in advance, but as the text presents it, Solomon's exclamation to Bathsheba implies that she has acted genuinely on Adonijah's behalf without an ulterior goal.

In his response to Bathsheba, Solomon makes a direct connection between marriage to Abishag and the kingship. While most interpreters agree that Solomon utilizes the situation as a pretext to eliminate Adonijah, his charge of Adonijah's offense must still make sense within the narrative. By the same token, however, Adonijah's request and Bathsheba's positive response must also seem believable within the audience's cultural assumptions. If Adonijah had wanted to make a bid for the throne, he would not have made a formal request for Abishag, as this recognizes Solomon's legal authority as king—it would make more sense for Adonijah to take Abishag without Solomon's permission. Stone significantly points out that by going to Solomon to request Abishag, Adonijah implicitly admits that it is Solomon who has relative power over any man who might want Abishag.<sup>467</sup> Like 2 Samuel 3:6-11 and 20:3, this passage

---

<sup>466</sup> LXX reflects *šat haššābā* "commander of the army."

<sup>467</sup> Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 129.

also suggests concern about what happens to women married to a king after the king has died. From these episodes, it seems that, according to the perspective of the writers of the David Narrative, women married to a king should not be married to a non-king. From Solomon's perspective, it does not matter that David does not consummate sexual relations with Abishag; if this is her intended purpose, she is still sexually associated with David.

It is most likely not Abishag herself who bestows power, despite the narrative going out of its way to privilege her beauty "throughout the territory of Israel" (1 Kgs 1:2-4), but rather her (intended, if not actual) sexual association with King David. I conjecture that the anxiety behind the place of women associated with the previous king has to do with royal ideology. Kings were divinely appointed leaders—David is clearly Yahweh's chosen, but he also specifically recognizes Saul as "Yahweh's anointed" (1 Sam 24:11, 26:9-11; 2 Sam 1:14). Through sexual intercourse a king's sexual partners would receive the royal 'seed' and therefore part of the divinely-imbued power of the king. This could explain why a usurper would take over the women who belonged to the deposed king (2 Sam 5:13; 12:8) and why sexual consorts of a deceased king could not marry elsewhere (2 Sam 3:6-11; 20:3). This would explain why Solomon finds it unacceptable for Abishag to be married to Adonijah, even though she is designated as a *sokenet* who does not have sexual relations with David. Thus Solomon can interpret Adonijah's desire for marriage to Abishag as an attempt to attain "royal" status alongside Solomon.

*Accusation and Execution: 1 Kings 2:23-25*

After his initial rejoinder to Bathsheba, Solomon swears an oath, saying (1 Kgs 2:23-24), “So may God do to me and even more if broaching this matter does not forfeit Adonijah his life! Now, as Yahweh lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David, my father, and who has provided me with a dynasty as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this very day!” (*kōh ya ‘āšeh-lî ‘ēlōhîm wēkōh yôšîp kî bēnapšô dibber ‘ādōnîyāhû ‘et-haddābār hazzeh wē‘attâ ḥay-YHWH ‘āšer hēkînanî wayyôšîbanî ‘al-kissē’ dāwid ‘ābî wa ‘āšer ‘āsāh-lî*<sup>468</sup> *bayīt ka ‘āšer dibbēr kî hayyôm yûmat ‘ādōnîyāhû*). Solomon immediately fulfills his oath, commanding his henchman Benaiah son of Jehoiada to kill Adonijah, which he dutifully fulfills (1 Kgs 2:25). Without giving Adonijah the opportunity to answer in his defense, Solomon has him executed.

Frank Moore Cross has stated that “if Adonijah did in fact behave as claimed, he deserved to be executed—for stupidity.”<sup>469</sup> Indeed, in 1 Kings 2 as well as 1 Kings 1, Adonijah is presented as not overly calculating in his politics and is no match for the shrewd Solomon. In 1 Kings 1 he fails to secure David’s public support for his succession or to deal with the Solomonic faction in time. His followers flee as soon as David announces that Solomon will be king after him, and Adonijah begs for mercy rather than fleeing and attempting to regroup. Likewise, in 1 Kings 2:13-25, he most likely does not attribute any ulterior motives to Solomon. Possibly Adonijah assumes that he has made a fair request since he has made peace with his brother the king. Since

---

<sup>468</sup> The versions support MT, but Gray (*I and II Kings*, 106) points out that the reference to David suggests that *lô* should be read for *lî*.

<sup>469</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 237.

David did not have intercourse with Abishag (1 Kgs 1:4), Adonijah must think it is within his rights and not inappropriate to ask for her in marriage, but he pays the price for his misjudgment.

Overall, this episode is an attempt to provide a valid reason for Solomon's execution of his half-brother Adonijah. Since this episode is in many respects a continuation of 1 Kings 1, Solomon's reaction to Adonijah should be seen in light of Adonijah's comparison to Absalom (1 Kgs 1:5-5.) 1 Kings 2:13-25 appears to be connecting Absalom's sexual takeover of David's *pīlagšīm* during his attempt to usurp the throne (2 Sam 16:20-23) with Adonijah's request for marriage to Abishag. The "wise" Solomon manipulates Adonijah's request to his advantage in order to eliminate the political threat posed by his half-brother, which he could not accomplish previously in 1 Kings 1:50-51 since Adonijah publicly begged for his life.<sup>470</sup> Solomon will soon have Shimei killed for reasons reminiscent to Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:36-46).<sup>471</sup> In both cases, Solomon chooses to interpret seemingly innocent situations as affronts against his authority, using technicalities and semantics to engender his desired political situation. Like 2 Samuel 3:6-11, 2 Kings 2:13-25 is also about different assumptions of power relations. Adonijah assumes that Solomon is in power, but Solomon is insecure on his throne and views Adonijah as a lingering threat. These disparate political assumptions are negotiated over sexual access to David's consort and communicated via David's wife.

---

<sup>470</sup> Like Adonijah, Joab will also grasp the horns of the altar to save his life, but this time Solomon orders Benaiah to strike him down anyway (1 Kgs 2:28-35).

<sup>471</sup> Shimei promises Solomon that he will not leave Jerusalem, and while he does leave, it is only to retrieve two runaway slaves. However, Solomon has him executed anyway (1 Kgs 2:36-46).



### **5.5. *Conclusions***

The accusations of sexual impropriety in 2 Samuel 3:6-11, 2 Samuel 6:16; 20-23, and 1 Kings 2:13-25 each involve power disparity. Both Ishba'al and Michal are the weaker parties, and Adonijah is also in the weaker position. None of them make any power gains but instead all suffer significant political consequences, including death. That these accusations of sexual impropriety are politically charged is clear in each episode. The sexual accusations in each case conceal deeper political issues that cannot be addressed directly—Ishba'al cannot openly address Abner's power relative to his or question Abner's loyalty; Michal certainly cannot make an open accusation of David's unsuitability as king; and Solomon would not straightforwardly ask Adonijah if he has designs on the throne. Moreover, political accusations are couched in sexual language as a provocation, amounting to what we might call "trumped up" charges. Ultimately, however, these three episodes about accusations of sexual misconduct all serve the strategic literary purposes of the David Narrative by providing explanations for political fallout between particular characters and defending the moral stature of the kings David and Solomon. As we have seen, each accusation of sexual misconduct results in an immediate and dramatic response that has significant political ramifications. In the next chapter, we will see that actual illicit sexual activity that is reported in the David Narrative results in even more drastic political consequences.

## CHAPTER 6

### EXPLICIT ENCOUNTERS

#### **6.1. Introduction**

Though sexuality is a prominent feature of the David narrative in the books of Samuel, there are only three stories in which sexual relations are specifically narrated. A section of 2 Samuel confronts the reader with several illicit sex scenes within fairly close sequence. In 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, David commits adultery with Bathsheba and resorts to having her husband Uriah killed to cover up the resulting pregnancy. After the death of their first child, David and Bathsheba conceive Solomon, the future king (also discussed in section 3.4.1). In 2 Samuel 13:1-22, David's son Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar, a violation for which Absalom, another of David's sons, has him killed. Absalom later attempts to depose David as king, and during his coup, he publicly demonstrates his sexual takeover of David's royal consorts (2 Sam 16:20-23). Aside from these episodes, sexual intercourse in the David Narrative is assumed by the text or suggested by characters' discourse but not explicitly narrated. For these stories, the sexual act is an important part of the plot development if not the main point of the pericope. In contrast, within the David Narrative there is also an example of an overt reference to sex that is an explicit denial of sexual intercourse. In 1 Kings 1:1-4, the text states specifically that David does *not* have sexual relations with Abishag (1 Kgs 1:4).

The three episodes in which sex explicitly occurs within the narrative—2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, 13:1-22, and 16:20-23—are connected literarily through the account of Nathan's oracle in which Yahweh curses David (2 Sam 12:1-15). Because of Nathan's

oracle against David in 2 Sam 12:7-14, as well as the placement of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 within the larger David narrative, the episode of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah can be viewed as the cause of the tumultuous events within David's household during his reign and his son's succession described in 2 Samuel 13-19 and 1 Kings 1-2. In the final form of the David Narrative 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 functions as an important turning point, as David's sexual transgression and violence against Uriah's household is repeated within David's own royal family, resulting in rape, fratricide, rebellion, and civil war.

Because in the present form of the David Narrative the account of David's adultery and murder and the resulting curse in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 comes before the narrative of Absalom's revolt, the stories of Amnon's rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 and Absalom's sexual takeover of David's harem in 2 Samuel 16:20-23 are seen as the effects of Yahweh's curse on David. Indeed, the placement of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 preceding the narrative of Absalom's revolt makes it difficult *not* to read these texts in relation to each other, with the result that the account of David's illicit actions and the resulting curse against him drives the interpretation of the stories that follow it. However, each of these episodes demonstrates its own literary integrity and, when read independently of any notion of a curse, each offers its own nuances of the entangled connection between sexuality and political power in the David Narrative. In order to extricate 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, 13:1-22, and 16:20-23 from being read in light of each other, I will analyze each text according to my view of their relative chronology instead of in their sequential order within the David Narrative, as I have done with the texts of previous chapters. Only after this, I will discuss the three stories in relation to one another.

Of the three texts in the David Narrative in which sexual relations overtly occur, I regard 2 Samuel 16:20-23 as the earliest and 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 as the latest. Even if this schematic is not correct in its details, my larger premise that these stories should be read individually as well as intertextually still holds. Therefore, I begin my discussion with 2 Samuel 16:20-23, the story of Absalom's public takeover of David's harem. While 2 Samuel 16:20-23 may or may not be part of the earliest core of Absalom revolt material, I think it soon became integrated into this narrative complex.<sup>472</sup>

Next, I will discuss the story of Amnon's rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22, which I regard as a later prologue to the long narrative of Absalom's revolt. In my view, this preface forms a type of "revision through introduction," the addition of material to the beginning of previously-received literary work.<sup>473</sup> In her dissertation about this topic, Sara Milstein states that this scribal technique "had the potential for enormous impact. Because the secondary contribution was at the front, the content of the older work was automatically reinterpreted through the new lens."<sup>474</sup> By giving an account of the origins of the political estrangement between David and Absalom, the story of Amnon's rape of Tamar adjusts the overall depiction of Absalom, and therefore of David also.<sup>475</sup>

Finally, since Nathan's oracle against David appears to "predict" the accounts of Amnon's rape of Tamar and especially Absalom's sexual takeover of David's consorts, I

---

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 222; see also Kratz, *Composition*, 175-176, with whom Hutton interacts in detail.

<sup>473</sup> Here I am indebted to the work of Sara J. Milstein, "Reworking Ancient Texts."

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>475</sup> Cf. Conroy, *Absalom!*, 92; B. O. Long, "Wounded Beginnings: David and Two Sons," in *Images of Man and God: Old Testament Short Stories in Literary Focus* (ed. idem; Sheffield, Almond Press, 1981), 26-34; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 327; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 172.

regard the episode involving David, Bathsheba, and Uriah as relatively the latest of these three texts, particularly Nathan's oracle cursing David.<sup>476</sup> In locating the *Sitz im Leben* for 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, I am generally persuaded by the view of Jeremy Hutton, who argues that this story served as part of Solomonic apologetic, proving beyond doubt Solomon's paternity and legitimacy but also depicting Solomon as an improvement upon his predecessor.<sup>477</sup> Hutton further argues that Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 12:1-15 is a secondary addition made during the Prophetic Redaction to account for the secession of the Northern Kingdom,<sup>478</sup> and I agree that the oracle is probably secondary. Whatever the actual *Sitz im Leben* of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, it appears that the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah, followed by Nathan's oracle against David, presents yet another "revision through introduction" and once again completely reframes the presentation of Absalom's revolt within the David Narrative.

## **6.2. Absalom and David's *Pīlagšīm*: 2 Samuel 16:20-23**

The longest block of material in the account of David's reign is a narrative complex about David's being deposed by his own son.<sup>479</sup> While it tells of a significant

---

<sup>476</sup> Cf., for example, McCarter, *II Samuel*, 290-291; 305-306; McKenzie, *King David*, 156; 162; idem, "LeDavid! (For David) 'Except in the Matter of Uriah the Hittite,'" *For and Against David*, 310-313; Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 22.

Besides the prediction element, there are other potentially late features: intra-biblical allusions, such as references to Abimelech and Saul, which suggest an awareness of a Saul-David cycle and perhaps (?) an early form of Judges. Moreover, the preoccupation with ritual washing could suggest knowledge of prescriptions in Leviticus (however, these customs could have existed prior to P or be later additions).

<sup>477</sup> Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 192-196. Cf. also the views of Ishida, with whom Hutton interacts in his discussion, "The Succession Narrative and Esarhaddon's Apology: A Comparison," in *Ah, Assyria...: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (eds. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991), 166-173; Halpern has a similar view in *David's Secret Demons*, 404-406.

<sup>478</sup> Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 224.

<sup>479</sup> This is a major argument against Rost's notion of a unified "Succession" Narrative. See discussion in section 2.3.

political challenge to David, it does not view the revolt as part of any kind of “curse” nor does it necessarily present a critical view of David.<sup>480</sup> Daniel Fleming has argued that the old David lore understands his rule over Israel as inherently fraught and his ability to maintain power over it a sign of his success.<sup>481</sup> Indeed, David is never defeated but ultimately regains control over Israel and establishes a dynasty. Therefore, the narrative recounting David’s overcoming the most significant threat to his reign should be understood as supportive of the king.<sup>482</sup>

In the midst of Absalom’s revolt against David comes the brief but rather bizarre<sup>483</sup> episode involving sexual relations with the king’s consorts. After taking control of Jerusalem, Absalom orders a tent set up on the palace roof where he publicizes his sexual takeover of the women of David’s harem remaining in the capital. This sexual action represents a specific political gesture aimed at rallying support for Absalom and bringing about victory against David.

#### *Background: Absalom Revolts*

In 2 Samuel 15:1, Absalom provides himself with a chariot, horses, and fifty runners, regalia befitting a king.<sup>484</sup> He also ingratiates himself with the people, kissing

---

<sup>480</sup> The amount of narrative space given to Absalom’s revolt (2 Sam 13-19) attests to the importance of Absalom and suggests that he was a significant historical figure that the Deuteronomistic editor had to acknowledge.

<sup>481</sup> Daniel Fleming, *Legacy of Israel*, esp. 98-109.

<sup>482</sup> I do not think David is portrayed negatively or as a weak ruler in the Absalom Revolt narrative. His mildness and love for his sons are intended to be elements in support of David and are not so different from the techniques used to defend David in HDR. Cf. McKenzie, *King David*, 162; idem, “LeDavid,” 311; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 327.

<sup>483</sup> At least from our contemporary perspective, though the notion that Absalom’s actions are “odious” suggests that the action is also regarded atypical and unexpected by the narrative.

<sup>484</sup> Cf. Samuel’s speech in 1 Sam 8:11. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 356.

those who bow to him and making the (impossible) promise to rule in favor of every legal dispute brought before him if only he were appointed “judge in the land” (*šōpēṭ bā’āreṣ*). In other words, Absalom suggests that if he were king, he would rule more justly than David (2 Sam 15:2-5a). Both of these actions show that Absalom has designs on David’s throne and regards himself as deserving of the kingship of Israel. Absalom’s popularity grows, and, to explain his increasing power, the text states in 2 Samuel 15:6 that Absalom “stole away the hearts of the men of Israel” (*wayēgannēb ’abšālôm ’et-lēb ’anšē yiśrā’ēl*). Yet it seems more likely that Absalom would have capitalized upon popular dissatisfaction with David’s rule, which the narrator does not want to admit.

Absalom asks David for permission to go to Hebron in order to fulfill a vow and David grants his request (2 Sam 15:7-9).<sup>485</sup> Absalom takes two hundred men with him to Hebron, though the text exonerates them by declaring that they had no knowledge of Absalom’s plans to revolt (2 Sam 15:11). While in Hebron, Absalom declares himself king (2 Sam 15:10). He amasses support for his revolt, and one of his followers is David’s counselor Ahitophel (2 Sam 15:12; 16:23). Absalom’s attempt at usurping the kingship seems to have been temporarily successful, since David flees Jerusalem upon hearing about the insurrection (2 Sam 15:14-16) and also refers to Absalom as “the king” (2 Sam 15:19).

David’s entire household joins him in his flight from Jerusalem except for ten of his *pīlagšîm*.<sup>486</sup> In 2 Samuel 15:16 a brief notice is given that “the king left behind ten

---

<sup>485</sup> According to 2 Samuel 2:1-4, Hebron is the location of David’s first capital, and 2 Samuel 3:2-5 lists Absalom as being born in Hebron. However, on its own 2 Samuel 15 does not provide any particular associations or connections to Hebron.

<sup>486</sup> While 2 Samuel 15:16 specifies that David leaves ten women in Jerusalem, there are no numbers provided in 2 Samuel 16:20-23. None of the Absalom revolt material indicates the overall number of

*pīlagšīm* wives to take care of the palace” (*wayya ‘āzōb hammelek ’ēt ‘ešer nāšīm pīlagšīm lišmor habbāyīt*).<sup>487</sup> The verb *√šmr* means “watch over,” with the sense of protecting or taking care of something or someone. However, *√šmr* can also mean “watch over” in the sense of “guard,” which is ironic in this instance since David does not *√šmr* his *pīlagšīm* but leaves them in Jerusalem unattended. The nuance of *√šmr* as “guard” will be more important in 2 Samuel 20:3 when David places the *pīlagšīm* in a “watched/guarded house” (*bêt-mišmeret*). It should be pointed out that David chooses to leave these women in Jerusalem—they are not given an option and do not remain in the occupied capital by their own choice. They are following the command of their husband and king and should be seen as loyal to David.

#### *Absalom and Ahitophel: An “Odious” Proposition*

Since David has already fled Jerusalem, Absalom easily enters the capital (2 Sam 16:15). In 2 Samuel 16:20 Absalom, wondering what his next move should be, says,

---

David’s consorts or the number of women who journeyed with David across the Jordan. Potentially, then, this group of women constituted the core group of David’s consorts.

<sup>487</sup> With others, I think it is very possible that 2 Samuel 15:16, as well as 2 Samuel 20:3 are later additions that help give continuity to 2 Samuel 16:20-23 within the larger Absalom Revolt narrative but also reflect different concerns or perspectives. For example, 2 Samuel 15:16 and 20:3 refer to David’s consorts as *nāšīm pīlagšīm* but 2 Samuel 16:20-23 refers to these women by the genitive construction *pīlagšē ‘ābîw*, indicating Absalom’s father, David. For further discussion, see Cook, “Notes on the Composition of 2 Samuel,” *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 16 (1900): 145-177, esp. 162-164; 176; Würthwein, *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids—theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* (Theologische Studien 115; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974), 36; and Langlamet, “Pour ou contre Salomon? La rédaction prosalomonienne de 1 Rous, I-II,” *RB* 83 (1976): 353; idem, “Absalom et les concubines de son père. Recherches sur II Sam., XVI, 21-22,” *RB* 84 (1977): 161-209. These scholars all regard 2 Samuel 16:20-22, as well as the brief mentions of David’s consorts in 2 Samuel 15:16 and 20:3, as secondary. Part of the arguments for this is that in 2 Samuel 16:20 Absalom begins with a command in the plural and 2 Samuel 17:1 begins a speech by Ahitophel, where he lays out his military strategy without a narrative introduction or set-up. In my view, 2 Samuel 16:20 seems like a logical place for a scribe to insert another tradition known about Absalom and Ahitophel, so I think it is possible that 2 Samuel 16:20-21, as well as 2 Samuel 15:16 and 20:3, became incorporated into the larger narrative of Absalom’s revolt after the account of Hushai and Ahitophel’s military council was already in place. However, I would not go as far as to strike 2 Samuel 16:21-22 as inferior. Cf. Gunn, *Story of King David*, 115-116; McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 385.



“Give your counsel—what should we do?” (*hābû lākem ‘ēšā mah-nna ‘āšeh*). Absalom addresses his question in the plural, but only Ahitophel answers. Ahitophel responds to Absalom’s request in 2 Samuel 16:21 with the advice: “Enter the *pīlagšîm* of your father whom he left to take care of the palace” (*bô’ ‘el-pīlagšê ‘ābîkā ‘āšer hinnîaḥ lišmôr habbāyîl*). The Hebrew verb  $\sqrt{bw}$ , which normally means “go into, enter,” can also be used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse,<sup>488</sup> as it should be understood here. Ahitophel counsels Absalom to have sexual relations with the women David left behind in the palace, a striking recommendation in the context of a *coup d’état*. The princely usurper seems to be more in need of military or political advice at this point, and, in fact, war strategy is the subject of the next episode (2 Sam 17:1-14). However, as I will stress, Ahitophel’s suggestion, though a sexual act, is intended as both a political and military gesture.

Ahitophel’s reasoning is that “all Israel will hear that you have become odious to your father and your following will be strengthened” (*wěšāma ‘ kol-yiśrā’ēl kî-nib ‘aštā ‘et- ‘ābîkā wěḥāzēqû yēdē kol- ‘āšer ‘ittāk*). Ahitophel specifically states that the point of Absalom’s sexual relations with David’s consorts is that it will strengthen his support base once all Israel has heard that Absalom “has become odious” (*nib ‘aštā*) to his father David. Though Absalom’s action is certainly directed at David, the ultimate goal seems not to change how David views Absalom but instead how the people view Absalom—as the next king.

---

<sup>488</sup> Other examples include: Genesis 16:2; 19:31; 30:3-4, 16; 38:8; Deuteronomy 22:13; 25:5; Jos 2:3. See also Michael D. Coogan, *God and Sex*, 1-18.

The root  $\sqrt{b's}$ , the basic meaning of which is “to stink,”<sup>489</sup> can also indicate a rupture in interpersonal relations, understood as “being abhorrent” to someone. Although there are only three attestations of  $\sqrt{b's}$  in the Niphal stem, all three examples are in 1-2 Samuel and describe causes of war. In 1 Samuel 13:3 Saul blows the *shôfâr* so that Israel will hear that his son Jonathan has defeated a Philistine garrison. When the people find out that “Israel had become odious” (*nib'aš*) to the Philistines, they muster to Saul at Gilgal to fight. The other attestation of Niphal  $\sqrt{b's}$  occurs in 2 Samuel 10:6. David sends messengers to console Hanun, the king of the Ammonites, over the death of his father and to renew Israel’s alliance with Ammon. However, Hanun’s advisors tell him that David’s real intention is to spy out the city so that he can conquer it. Hanun believes their counsel and humiliates David’s messengers by cutting off half of their beards and half of their skirts up to their buttocks (2 Sam 10:4). Knowing that the offensive act will make them “odious” (*nib'ašû*) to David, they form an alliance with the Arameans to wage war against David (2 Sam 10:6).

A comparison with 2 Samuel 10:1-6 is especially illustrative for understanding 2 Samuel 16:20-22.<sup>490</sup> The cutting of the messengers’ beards, a symbol of masculinity in the ancient world,<sup>491</sup> is intended to represent loss of manhood, and, as McCarter suggests, the cutting of the skirts may be symbolic of castration.<sup>492</sup> While no sexual activity is described in the narrative, David’s messengers are humiliated in a sexualized manner.

---

<sup>489</sup> Cognates include Biblical Aramaic, Ugaritic  $\sqrt{b's}$ , and Akkadian *ba'ašû*, all having the basic meaning of “stink;” cf. also Old South Arabic  $\sqrt{b's}$  “be harmful,” Arabic *ba'isa* “be miserable.”

<sup>490</sup> Stone (*Sex, Honor, and Power*, 120-125) provides a detailed comparison of 2 Samuel 10 in the context of 2 Samuel 16:20-22.

<sup>491</sup> For examples and further discussion, see Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 122.

<sup>492</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, 270-271.

The cutting of the men's skirts certainly exposes their genitals, and the exposure of the genitals in the context of military defeat is described for women in Isaiah 47:2-3 and Nahum 3:5, as well as figuratively in Ezekiel 16:36; 23:29.<sup>493</sup> As representatives of the king, the humiliation of David's messengers is intended as an offense to David himself, a representational attack on David's own masculinity.

In 2 Samuel 16:21 Absalom sexually violates David's remaining representatives in Jerusalem, his consorts, in order to incite David to military action. In both 2 Samuel 10:6 and 2 Samuel 16:21, a sexual humiliation aimed at David but enacted on David's subordinates is intended to instigate war. At this point, David has fled from Absalom rather than fight him, so Absalom's usurpation, though successful thus far, remains incomplete. Therefore Absalom's sexual takeover of David's consorts should be construed as a provocation for David to fight.<sup>494</sup>

In the examples of 1 Samuel 13 and 2 Samuel 10, the offending party is fully aware that their offense will result in combat, and they prepare for the impending reprisal by mustering troops or by hiring foreign military aid. Presumably, the failure to respond with a violent reprisal in the face of such an insult would signify complete political humiliation and result in making the offended party vulnerable to outside attacks. At once a provocation for David to fight, Absalom's public takeover of David's women also

---

<sup>493</sup> The exposure of genitals is a concern elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Exod 20:26 forbids building steps to the altar of Yahweh to prevent the exposure of genitalia while climbing up the stairway. The term "uncovering the nakedness" (*g'lh 'erwā*) is used euphemistically for sexual intercourse, specifically examples of incest, in Leviticus 18:1-18; 20:17-21. In Genesis 9:21-22, Noah, drunk, exposes himself in his tent, and, though the passage is difficult to interpret, it seems that his son Canaan sexually disgraces him in some way, for which Noah curses Canaan. Cf. discussion in Knust, *Unprotected Texts*, 127-131.

<sup>494</sup> This is actually Absalom's second declaration of war. In Hebron, the *shofar* is blown when he declares himself king, effectively a call to arms. Since David does not fight, however, Absalom intensifies his declaration of war by flaunting his sexual takeover of David's consorts to incite his father to take military action.

functions as a signal for Israel, already aligned with Absalom, to rally in support of Absalom in preparation for an imminent attack from David. Appropriately, immediately after Absalom enacts Ahitophel's advice, he convenes a war council to devise a battle strategy.

### *Absalom and the Pīlagšîm*

Absalom complies with Ahitophel's counsel and a tent is set up on the palace roof in which Absalom has sexual relations with David's concubines in a very public fashion (2 Sam 16:22): "so a tent was pitched for Absalom upon the roof and Absalom entered the *pīlagšîm* of his father in the sight of all Israel" (*wayyattû lē'abšālôm hā'ōhel 'al-haggāg wayyābō' 'abšālôm 'el-pīlagšê 'ābîw lē'ênê kol-yisrā'ēl*). Although the tent presumably provides some level of privacy, its deliberate placement upon the roof of the palace publicizes what is taking place therein. Even if Absalom's act is merely symbolic, it is meant to be understood as a sexual appropriation of David's consorts. The text also stresses the public nature of this sexual act. Ahitophel tells Absalom that "when all Israel hears" of his sexual takeover of David's *pīlagšîm*, his following will be stronger (2 Sam 16:21), and the narrator states that Absalom has relations with the *pīlagšîm* "in the sight of all Israel" (2 Sam 16:22). Ahitophel's goal is not public sex acts; rather, it is the public declaration that David's women have been taken over by Absalom. In both 2 Samuel 16:21 and 22 the term "all Israel" (*kol-yisrā'ēl*) is used, emphasizing the entirety of the population. The "hearing" and "seeing" of "all Israel" in 2 Samuel 16:21 and 22 refers to the whole nation having knowledge about this sexual act.<sup>495</sup> Absalom aims for

---

<sup>495</sup> A parallel example of public declaration occurs in 2 Samuel 15:10, when Absalom sends agents to the tribes of Israel, telling the tribes that when they hear the sound of the *shôfār*, they should announce that Absalom has become king in Hebron.

this sexual act to be broadcast throughout Israel to rally more supporters to his side by instigating a decisive battle against David, the now fugitive king. The motivation for this ostentatious sexual act is for Israel to join forces with Absalom against David, as in 1 Samuel 13.

If Absalom's public sexual usurpation of David's consorts is understood as an act of war, this gesture becomes strikingly reminiscent of sexual violence against women in a military context. The Hebrew Bible contains numerous examples that associate warfare with sexual violence directed against women. In Judges 5:30, the victory song of Deborah, the mother of the enemy Sisera imagines the spoils of war including a woman or two (lit. "a womb, two wombs") for each of the soldiers (*raḥam raḥāmātayīm lě'rō's geber*). Lamentations 5:11 declares that as a result of military defeat "they violated the women of Zion; the maidens of the cities of Judah" (*nāšīm bēšīyyōn 'innū bētūlōt bē'ārē yēhūdā*). Prophetic literature contains depictions of sexual violence against women of a conquered city, both Israelite and foreign (Isa 13:16; Zech 14:2). Moreover, prophetic literature contains personifications of cities as women that imagine the military defeat of the city as the physical abuse and sexual violation of a woman (Isa 47:1-3; Jer 13:22; Ezek 16:35-41; 23:9-10, 22-29; Nah 3:5).<sup>496</sup> In light of these examples, the close association between military action and a public display of sexual ownership in 2 Samuel 16:20-23 is suggestive and disturbing. I do not necessarily wish to suggest that this story must be understood as an example of sexual violence; yet, I think it is fair to understand

---

<sup>496</sup> For further discussion, see Peggy Day, "Yahweh's Broken Marriages as Metaphoric Vehicle in the Hebrew Bible Prophets" in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* (eds. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 219-241, esp. 236-238; also Harold C. Washington, "Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach," *Biblical Interpretation* 5 (1997): 324-363.

Absalom's actions as coercive. More importantly, however, is the representational connection between the sexual violence used to subjugate and humiliate a defeated enemy and a sexual insult directed toward an enemy who has yet to be defeated militarily. Both are symbolic messages of power between men that are conveyed *via* the bodies of women.

The ambiguity surrounding the status of *pīlagšīm*, discussed in section 5.2, raises the question of whether Absalom's sexual takeover of David's *pīlagšīm* would have constituted incest. Biblical legal texts condemn sexual relations with the wife of a man's father, both his mother and a woman not his mother (Lev 18:8), but the term *pīlegeš* is not used. For a narrative comparison, Genesis 35:22 states that Jacob's son Reuben has relations with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine: "Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, the *pīlegeš* of his father, and Israel heard" (*wayyēlek rē'ûbēn wayyiškab 'et-bilhâ pīlegeš 'ābîw wayyišma' yisrā'ēl*).<sup>497</sup> The wording is very similar to this Absalom episode, where the ten women are referred to as "the *pīlagšīm* of his [Absalom's] father" (2 Sam 16:22). Moreover, in 2 Samuel 16 Israel the nation is meant to hear of Absalom's affront; likewise, in the Genesis text the patriarch Jacob, called Israel, hears about Reuben's offense. Despite the parallels between Genesis 35:22 and 2 Samuel 16:21-22, it is unclear to what extent Levitical purity laws or patriarchal legends reflect practices regarding royal consorts. 2 Samuel 16:20-22 never specifically addresses the issue of incest, and this does not seem to be the main focus of the text.<sup>498</sup> However, the text does

---

<sup>497</sup> In Jacob's final words to his sons (Gen 49:4), he declares that his first-born Reuben will not have preeminence over his brothers because "you went up to the bed of your father, then you defiled my couch" (*kî 'ālītā miškēbē 'ābikā 'āz ḥillaltā yēšû'î*), which seems to refer to Genesis 35:22.

<sup>498</sup> Athalya Brenner (*Intercourse of Knowledge*, 90-107) argues that within narratives that contain examples of incest, the incest issue is always of secondary importance.

underscore the familial relationship by referring to David as Absalom's "father" (16:21, 22) instead of "David" or "the king." The repeated references to David, the king, as Absalom's father, subtly highlight the complicated power relationships that reverberate around this sexual act.

### *Sex Advice*

2 Samuel 16:23 describes Ahitophel's counsel "as if one had inquired of an oracle of God (lit. "word of God"); so was all the counsel of Ahitophel, both with David and Absalom" (*ka 'ăšer yiš'al bidbar hā'ēlōhîm kēn kol- 'ăṣat 'ăḥîtopel gam-lēdāwid gam lē'abšālôm*). Though Ahitophel is referred to as a counselor (2 Sam 15:16) and never called a prophet or a seer, prophets often served as advisors to kings in Israel and the ancient Near East,<sup>499</sup> and the statement in 2 Samuel 16:23 imbues him with a liminal quality associated with these figures. This extraordinary statement comparing Ahitophel's counsel to a divine oracle gives his advice a very high level of importance and specifically indicates that Ahitophel's strategy in 2 Samuel 16:21 is considered an astute plan.<sup>500</sup>

Ahitophel's advice is also the subject of the following episode of Absalom's war strategy (17:1-14), where his counsel has a further connection to the "word of God," but with a very different result. Absalom rejects Ahitophel's war counsel in favor of the battle plan of Hushai, who is really a double agent loyal to David. This is an answer to David's prayer 2 Samuel 15:31, where, upon being informed of Ahitophel's defection

---

<sup>499</sup> For example, 1 Kings 22; Isaiah 38-39/2 Kings 19-20, as well as the Mari letters, Ninevah oracles, and the Report of Wenamun. For transliteration and translation of these texts and other examples, see Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (WAW 12; Atlanta: SBL, 2003).

<sup>500</sup> However, if 2 Samuel 16:21-22 is an insertion, 2 Samuel 16:23 would introduce Ahitophel's military strategy in 2 Samuel 17:1-3, not conclude the episode in 2 Samuel 16:20-22.

during his flight from Jerusalem, David prays to Yahweh for Ahitophel's counsel to be turned into foolishness. Immediately after David prays to Yahweh, he reaches the ascent of the Mount of Olives and meets Hushai, who agrees to return to Jerusalem as a double-agent for David. After Absalom chooses to follow Hushai's war strategy, Ahitophel returns to his hometown of Giloh and hangs himself (2 Sam 17:23), most likely because he realizes that the revolt is doomed.

In the immediate context of 2 Samuel 16:20-22, it seems that Ahitophel's recommendation of a sexual takeover of David's concubines has successful political consequences since Absalom convenes a war council (2 Sam 17:1-14) and is able to muster all the men of Israel to fight for him against David (2 Sam 17:24). However, Absalom is ultimately unsuccessful in his attempt to take the throne. His troops are defeated by David's in battle (2 Sam 18:6-8), and Absalom is killed as he tries to escape. Absalom loses the revolt and his life not because of his takeover of David's consorts but because he refuses Ahitophel's next piece of advice to go after David immediately. Although it is Yahweh who leads Absalom astray through Hushai's counsel in direct answer to David's prayer (2 Sam 15:31), Yahweh does not simply give David victory in battle. David only succeeds in quelling the revolt because Absalom rejects Ahitophel's "oracular" counsel.<sup>501</sup>

#### *Political Fallout: The Fate of the Pīlagšīm*

After the defeat of Absalom's revolt, David makes his way back to Jerusalem only to face sectional strife between Israel and Judah, which results in the secession of the northern tribes following a Benjaminite named Sheba. Amidst the narration of this

---

<sup>501</sup> This idea was suggested to me by Daniel Fleming, personal communication.



new threat to David's kingdom, the fate of the ten consorts is briefly addressed (2 Sam 20:3):

When David came to his palace in Jerusalem, the king took the ten women, concubines, whom he had left to watch over the palace, and he put them in a watched house. He provided for them but did not enter them. And so they remained confined until the day of their death, living as widows.

*wayyābo' dāwid 'el-bêtô yêrûšālaïm wayyiqqah hammelek 'et 'ešer-nāšîm  
pīlagšîm 'āšer hinnîaḥ lišmor habbayîṭ wayyittēnēm bêt-mišmeret  
wayēkalkēlēm wa'ālêhem lō'-bā' wattihyeynâ šērurôt 'ad-yôm mūtān  
'almēnūt ḥayyūt*

This verse makes no mention of what happens to the concubines while they were “watching the palace” in Jerusalem, a striking omission that is perhaps indicative of the embarrassment Absalom has brought upon David. The term for the place where David puts his *pīlagšîm*, a “watched” house (*bêt-mišmeret*), involves word play with the verb  $\sqrt{\text{šmr}}$ . In 2 Samuel 15:16 David leaves his *pīlagšîm* to “watch” the palace, as 2 Samuel 20:3 also notes, but upon his return, it is the *pīlagšîm* themselves David puts under “watch.”<sup>502</sup> The nuance of  $\sqrt{\text{šmr}}$  as “guard” is important here, since, as the comment that they are “confined to the day of their death” (*šērurôt 'ad-yôm mūtān*) suggests, David basically imprisons his consorts. The women whom David left unprotected against Absalom are now put under constant guard. Despite their imprisonment, however, there is no evidence within the text that the women are regarded as even partially responsible for or complicit with Absalom's actions in 2 Samuel 16:22. Moreover, 2 Samuel 20:3 specifically mentions that David provides for his ten *pīlagšîm* (*wayēkalkēlēm*), so it seems that their situation, while unenviable, should not be regarded as punishment.

---

<sup>502</sup> Again, if these texts are later additions they could reflect different perspectives and concerns.

The question remains of why David leaves these women in Jerusalem in the first place. Should this be regarded as a tactical error on David's part? A symbolic message that he plans to return? The other item of importance that David leaves behind is the Ark of Yahweh, and David seems to expect that Absalom will respect this cultic object as well as the officiants who are responsible for it (2 Sam 15:23-29). On analogy, perhaps he also expects that Absalom, as the current, if temporary king (2 Sam 15:19), will take responsibility for David's household, which would include caring for the women David leaves in Jerusalem (i.e., not killing them). Potentially, the possibility of Absalom's ability to engage sexual relations with David's consorts it might even have been assumed within the narrative context since Absalom would now have open access to, and authority over, these women. This possibility connects to the oblique references to Yahweh giving David Saul's wives (2 Sam 12:8) and David taking more consorts after he conquers Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:3), as well as the authority displayed by kings Ishba'al and Solomon over women who had been consorts to their fathers and predecessors. However, since it is the strategy of Ahitophel, whose counsel is like the oracle of Yahweh (2 Sam 16:23), for Absalom to publicly enter David's harem, this indicates that Absalom's actions are unexpected and should not have been anticipated by David. More importantly, however David's decision to leave these women in Jerusalem might be interpreted, Absalom's public display of his sexual conquest of David's consorts seems to be the insult and provocation rather than the mere fact of Absalom's having relations with these women.

While David provides for his consort's material needs, he never has sexual relations with them again (*wa'ālêhem lō'-bā'*). Moreover, the women are described as "confined to the day of their death, living *as* widows" (*šērūrôt 'ad-yôm mūtān 'almēnūt*

*ḥayyût*). The phrase *'alměnût ḥayyût* is admittedly difficult,<sup>503</sup> but the idea seems to be that they live as if they are widows even though their husband David is still alive. However, unlike actual widows, these women cannot remarry and have no freedom of movement, so the phrase should not be taken literally. To me, the sense of the phrase is that they are bereft of their husband's person, as are widows. However, David also ensures that these women will not be sexually available to other men.<sup>504</sup> This is the main point of the textual note in 2 Samuel 20:3—to emphasize the sexual quarantine of the concubines whom Absalom has violated. It seems that a renewal of sexual relations with these ten concubines would not have augmented David's efforts to reestablish his hegemony; perhaps it would have even been seen as an acceptance of Absalom's sexual shaming. Absalom had intended to insult David by the sexual takeover of his consorts, and though Absalom has been killed and the revolt vanquished, the bodies of these women serve as a continual reminder of Absalom's humiliation of David.

Absalom is not motivated by lust as are David and Amnon in the other episodes which narrate sexual activity, 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 and 13:1-22, which I discuss below. As evidenced by Ahitophel's reasoning, there is no emotional component to this sexual act whatsoever. Absalom's rape of David's concubines is strictly a political statement conveyed via the bodies of these ten women. The sexual violation is thus deliberately planned and carefully orchestrated. This sexual act is essentially a public relations tactic,

---

<sup>503</sup> MT has *'alměnût ḥayyût* "widowhood of life" whereas LXX appears to translate *'alměnôt ḥayyôt* "living widows." Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 419; 423.

<sup>504</sup> Cf. discussion in section 5.2 and 5.4 that kings' consorts could not be available to a non-king after the death of the king to whom they were married.

part of Absalom's campaign to win political support over and against David.<sup>505</sup> This one tactic simultaneously humiliates David by demonstrating his inability to protect his women, instigates military combat via sexual insult, and at the same time showcases Absalom's virility, a necessary component for political leadership.<sup>506</sup> Any and all of these components would strengthen Absalom's following.

Publicly having sex with David's concubines is the first reported action Absalom takes once he arrives in the capital. Besides deciding on a battle plan against David, it is the only action reported about Absalom while in Jerusalem, which indicates that there is political significance to this display of Absalom's sexuality. This sexual act symbolically completes Absalom's *coup d'état* before he sets out to defeat David in battle and finalize his takeover of the kingship. Absalom's sexual conquest of David's concubines in 2 Samuel 16:20-22 represents the conquering he plans to achieve against David on the battlefield but that, in the end, he is unable to accomplish.

### **6.3. Amnon and Tamar: 2 Samuel 13:1-22**

Brother rapes sister; brother kills brother; son wages war against father. David's son Amnon rapes David's daughter Tamar, his half-sister, and this act of sexual violence catalyzes a narrative of revenge and rebellion carried out by her brother Absalom. Thus this narrative of rape has political consequences that lead to a nearly successful *coup d'état*. Significantly, it is a *sexual* offense that initiates the in-family fighting and eventually leads to the national drama of revolt and civil war.

---

<sup>505</sup> Cf. Absalom's self-promotion and hand-shaking described in 2 Samuel 15:2-6, where he criticizes David's dispensation of justice and promises to uphold any case brought before him.

<sup>506</sup> As evidenced by 1 Kings 1. David in his old age is not able to consummate relations with Abishag, and immediately afterwards the narrative turns to the contest of succession between Adonijah and Solomon.

As indicated above, I regard 2 Samuel 13:1-22 as a prologue added to an already-existing narrative complex of Absalom's Revolt. This story of sexual offense reframes the entire Absalom Revolt narrative by softening the reader's view of Absalom, which helps to explain David's forgiveness of Absalom's fratricide and his intense grief at Absalom's death. For this narrative, a sexual misdeed is a viable mechanism to explain fratricide with important political ramifications leading to revolt.

*Introducing the Characters: All in the Family*

From the first verse the reader learns that "Absalom, the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar," and that Amnon, another of David's sons, "lusts after her"<sup>507</sup> (*ûlē'abšālôm ben-dāwid 'āḥôt yāpā ūšmāh tāmār wayye'ēhābehā 'amnôn ben-dāwid*). While the action of 2 Samuel 13:1-22 revolves mostly around the figures of Amnon and Tamar, it is significant that Absalom is the first character mentioned—a reminder that the focus of the larger narrative is Absalom's revolt.<sup>508</sup> This is also clear at the end of the narrative, which highlights Absalom's role as avenger. These details prepare the reader for an entirely political framework, as much as the story revolves around an intra-familial sexual scandal. Though David is a background figure for much of 2 Samuel 13:1-22, the larger narrative context is ultimately focused on his kingship; therefore, this story primarily involving David's children presents a particular view of David as king.

---

<sup>507</sup> While the Hebrew uses the usual verb for love (*ʾḥb*) here, it is clear from the context of the rest of the narrative that Amnon does not really "love" Tamar at all but instead is interested only in satisfying his sexual cravings. The root *ʾḥb* can have a multiplicity of meanings, as does the English word "love," so there is not a one-to-one translation correspondence. In this context *ʾḥb* would be better translated "lust."

<sup>508</sup> Cf., for example, Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 240-41; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 101; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 327; Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 106.

Amnon and Absalom are both called a “son of David” (*ben-dāwid*). Tamar’s father is also David (2 Sam 13:18) and though the name of her mother is not given, throughout the narrative she is primarily designated as Absalom’s sister (2 Sam 13:1, 4, 20), which suggests that she is Absalom’s full sister and Amnon’s half-sister.<sup>509</sup> If this is the case, then Absalom and Amnon are also half-brothers, having different mothers.<sup>510</sup> There is no information about the relative ages of any of the characters and, equally, there is no evidence that primogeniture is assumed by the narrative.

The sibling relationship between Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom is crucial to understanding the story. The narrative highlights the familial relationship by repeatedly referring to Amnon and Tamar, as well as Absalom, as “brother” or “sister.” A form of the basic term for sibling (‘*āḥ*/‘*āḥôt*) occurs twenty-one times in the narrative. The greatest concentration of sibling terms occur in 2 Samuel 13:1-12, before Tamar’s refusal of Amnon, but they are absent in 2 Samuel 13:13-19 when Amnon rapes Tamar and the rupture of the sibling relationship occurs. Sibling language reappears in 2 Samuel 13:20 when Absalom enters the narrative. This verse employs terms for brother and sister an astounding five times, emphasizing Absalom’s position as Tamar’s full brother and future

---

<sup>509</sup> In 2 Samuel 14:27 Absalom is listed as having a daughter named Tamar who is described similarly to Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1. Tamar, Absalom’s daughter, is “beautiful of appearance” (*yěpat mar’eh*), and Tamar, Absalom’s sister, is also “beautiful” (*yāpā*). A few possibilities exist: Absalom named his daughter after his sister or there was confusion surrounding the name of Absalom’s daughter and sister. Similar confusion surrounds Absalom’s descendents, as 2 Samuel 14:27 mentions that Absalom has three sons and a daughter, but 2 Samuel 18:18 describes a pillar Absalom erects because he is without sons. There are other instances of confusion around women and family in Samuel, such as the confused traditions between Merab/Michal in 1 Samuel 18. Another, albeit remote, possibility exists, that a situation originally involving Absalom’s daughter was changed to his sister, which is more artistic in a narrative that ultimately leads to fratricide and allows for the emphasis of the sibling terminology that is so prevalent.

<sup>510</sup> This view is supported by the list of David’s sons in 2 Samuel 3, but this information probably comes from a different source/time with different preoccupations. According to the list of David’s sons born at Hebron in 2 Samuel 3:2-5, Amnon was his firstborn by Ahinoam, and Absalom was his third son by Ma‘acah.

avenger.<sup>511</sup> It is unclear to what extent incest is an issue in this narrative,<sup>512</sup> but the repetition of “brother” and “sister” throughout the narrative underlines the familial relations of the main characters and serves as a reminder of the incestuous nature of the rape.<sup>513</sup>

From Amnon’s perspective, at least, his kinship to Tamar does not seem to be what impedes him from having sexual access to her. According to 2 Samuel 13:2, Amnon sees his main obstacle being Tamar’s socio-sexual status: “for she was a virgin and to Amnon it seemed impossible to do anything to her” (*kî bêtûlâ hî’ wayyippālê’ bē’ênê ’amnôn la’ăšôt lāh mē’ûmâ*). Amnon thinks it is impossible for him to have sexual access to Tamar because of her status as a *bêtûlâ*, not because she is his half-sister.<sup>514</sup> As David’s unmarried daughter, Tamar’s sexuality would have officially been under the protection and authority of her father. Moreover, when Amnon tells his friend Jonadab of his obsession with Tamar, Amnon says, “I desire Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom” (*’et-tāmār ’ăḥôt ’abšālôm ’āḥî ’ānî ’ōhēb*).<sup>515</sup> By emphasizing that

---

<sup>511</sup> Bar-Efrat (*Narrative Art*, 272) discusses the concentric arrangement of sibling terms. Cf. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 112.

<sup>512</sup> I will discuss the issue of incest further at various points below. Bar-Efrat (*Narrative Art*, 239-240), Fokkelman (*Narrative Art and Poetry*, 103), Hertzberg (*I and II Samuel*, 322-323), Anderson (*II Samuel*, 172; 175; 177), and Stone (*Sex, Honor, and Power*, 114) view Amnon’s crime as the rape of an unbetrothed virgin; McCarter (*II Samuel*, 323-324; 327-328) regards incest as the main offense.

<sup>513</sup> Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 324; 328.

<sup>514</sup> Though often translated “virgin,” the term *bêtûlâ* probably connotes a young woman of marriageable status; though virginity would have been assumed, the term seems to have had a social nuance beyond the biological meaning. See Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, “Virginity in the Bible” in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 79-96; cf. also Jerrold Cooper, “Virginity in Mesopotamia” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001* (vol. 1; eds. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project), 91-108.

<sup>515</sup> See McCarter (*II Samuel*, 321) on the effect of assonance in Amnon’s response to Jonadab, which he describes as a “series of gasping sighs.” Cf. Conroy, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 29 and Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 40.

Tamar is Absalom's sister, Amnon distances his own sibling relationship to her (2 Sam 13:4). Yet, this begs the question of why Tamar's *bēṭulâ* status is an impediment to Amnon having sexual access to her. Why could he not have married her legitimately? While the text does not specify the answer, as an unmarried daughter of the king, Tamar would be of value to David for diplomatic alliances through marriage. Moreover, as the creator of a new regime, marriage alliances would have been especially important for the Davidic throne. Intra-familial marriage, therefore, would not have been politically expedient at a time when David would have wanted to establish his dynasty. Furthermore, we might also speculate that the emphasis on Tamar as Absalom's sister is indicative of rivalry between Amnon and Absalom to become the heir apparent.

The other character introduced in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 is the figure of Jonadab, Amnon's "shrewd friend" (*rēa' ...ḥākām*),<sup>516</sup> who finds out about Amnon's obsession with Tamar and concocts a scheme by which Amnon can gain access to Tamar (2 Sam 13:3-5). Jonadab is the son of David's brother Shimeah (2 Sam 13:3), and so is cousin to both Amnon and Tamar. Like Amnon, Jonadab should also value protecting the sexual honor of his female relatives, but instead he knowingly places her in a vulnerable situation by developing a plan that results in her sexual violation, an additional betrayal of Tamar by one of her kinsmen. At this point at least, it seems that Jonadab values cultivating

---

<sup>516</sup> I understand Jonadab's designation to indicate a close confidant, not an official court title. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 321 and Anderson, *II Samuel*, 174. McCarter also discusses the difficulties with translating *ḥākām* in this verse since the usual English translation "wise" has a positive connotation but in Hebrew *ḥākām* has a more neutral sense as an intellectual, not a moral, quality. Thus I translate in keeping with the context of the narrative in which Jonadab does not appear neutral to the reader but negative.



Amnon's favor more highly than he values Tamar or fears possible retribution from Absalom or David.<sup>517</sup>

For two of the episodes in the David narrative where sex is explicitly described, 2 Samuel 13:1-22 and 2 Samuel 16:20-22, a strategy from a third party is presented and accepted before the illicit sexual act occurs. Absalom's public rape of David's concubines is the result of his choice to enact the counsel of Ahitophel, and Amnon's opportunity to rape Tamar comes from his friend Jonadab's strategy. The text presents both characters as legitimate wisdom figures. Jonadab is described as "shrewd" (*ḥākām*) in 2 Samuel 13:33, and Ahitophel's counsel is compared to a divine oracle in 2 Samuel 16:23. Furthermore, both Ahitophel and Jonadab feature in two back-to-back episodes but nowhere else in the David Narrative. Jonadab refutes the rumor that Absalom has killed all the king's sons, correctly informing David that Absalom has only killed Amnon (2 Sam 13:32-33), and Ahitophel proposes the better war strategy even though his plan is not followed (2 Sam 17:1-14). In the first story in which Jonadab and Ahitophel appear they give advice related to sex, and in the following episode, the "wise" character demonstrates superior understanding related to an act of violence.<sup>518</sup> Following the right counsel was very important for kings, and it seems that advice relating to sexual matters would not have been excluded.

---

<sup>517</sup> It is interesting to note that in 2 Samuel 13:23-39, the account of Absalom's murder of Amnon, Jonadab also plays an important role in an advisory capacity. He is the only one to realize that Absalom did not kill all the king's sons (as is falsely reported to David) but only Amnon in retribution for his rape of Tamar. He tells David in 2 Sam 13:33 "let not my lord the king take the thing (the false report) to his heart" (*'al-yāšēm 'ādōnī hammelek 'el-libbō dābar*), because it is only Amnon who is dead. This seems a rather uncaring response for someone who is supposed to be Amnon's "friend" in the previous episode.

<sup>518</sup> Whybray (*Succession Narrative*, 57-60) has discussed the importance of counsel in the "Succession Narrative, and, in fact two of David's doomed sons, Amnon and Absalom, receive advice about sex that they immediately follow.

### *Love “sickness” and Love Poetry*

When Amnon’s lust for Tamar goes unmet, he becomes depressed because of his sexual frustration. Amnon is described in 2 Samuel 13:2 as “frustrated to the point of making himself ill” (*wayyēšer lē’amnôn lēhithallôt*). The basic meaning of the root  $\sqrt{srr}$  is “tie” or “bind,” but it can also have an intransitive meaning of “cramped” or “restricted,” applied both literally and figuratively. There are a few other instances where the term has a psychological component, such as David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan.<sup>519</sup> Also, Amnon’s friend Jonadab inquires as to why he is so “depressed” (*dal*) in 2 Samuel 13:4. The basic meaning of this adjective is “low” or “poor,” but here Jonadab is describing Amnon’s appearance and demeanor, indicating that Amnon is “downcast” and perhaps has even begun to neglect his physical appearance, making him appear “poor” rather than princely. These terms paint a rather vivid description of the infatuated Amnon sulking in his unrequited obsession over Tamar. We might even say colloquially that at the beginning of the narrative, at least, the prince appears to be lovesick.

The motif of lovesickness is a feature of ancient Egyptian and Hebrew love poetry, and at first glance, Amnon’s despondence over Tamar at the beginning of the story appears similar to the descriptions of lovesickness within these love songs. In Song of Songs 2:5 and 5:8 the female speaker describes herself as “lovesick” (*hōlat ’ahābā*) both when she lies in the embrace of her beloved and at night when she goes in search of him. In the Papyrus Chester Beatty “Song of Entertainment” both the male and female speakers describe themselves as ill at some point. The female speaker says, “My brother

---

<sup>519</sup> 2 Samuel 1:26; 2 Sam 24:14; Psa 31:10, 69:18; Lam 1:20; and 1 Chr 21:13. When there is a psychological component,  $\sqrt{srr}$  is often translated “distressed,” since there is a similar semantic association between physical and psychological constraints in the English word. Here, however, I think that “frustrated” is a more apt description of Amnon’s state.

roils my heart with his voice, making me take ill,” and as part of an extended description of lovesickness the male speaker says, “Seven whole days I have not seen my sister.

Illness has invaded me, my limbs have grown heavy, and I barely sense my own body.”<sup>520</sup> Given that this story is ultimately about rape, not love, I think that 2 Samuel 13 manipulates the motif of lovesickness found in ancient Egyptian and Hebrew love poetry.<sup>521</sup> I do not wish to argue that 2 Samuel 13 directly alludes to the love poems quoted above, but rather that the story draws upon known literary motifs surrounding romantic love and inverts these motifs to suggest that it is a love story gone completely awry.

Already in verse 2 the statement explaining Amnon’s lovesickness—that it was because he could not see a way to “do anything” to Tamar (*la’ăśôt lāh mē’ûmā*)—is telling, for this certainly does not sound like love poetry. While celebratory of the sensual, ancient Near Eastern love poetry is generally euphemistic about describing

---

<sup>520</sup> Translation after Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 52-55.

<sup>521</sup> For further discussions of ancient Egyptian love poetry, see Alfred Hermann, *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959); John L. Foster, *Love Songs of the New Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974); John B. White, *A Study of the Language of Love in the Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Poetry* (SBLDS 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1978); John Gwyn Griffiths, “Love as a Disease,” in *Studies in Egyptology: Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, 2 vols. (ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 349-364; Pascal Vernus, *Chants d’amour de l’Égypte antique: présentation, traduction et notes* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992); Barbara Hughes Fowler, *Love Lyrics of Ancient Egypt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Bernard Mathieu, *La Poésie Amoureuse de L’Égypte Ancienne: Recherches sur un genre littéraire au Nouvel Empire* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1997); Stefan Wimmer, “Ancient Egyptian Love Songs: Papyrus Harris 500, New Insights into an Old Problem,” in *The Art of Love Lyrics: In Memory of Bernard Couroyer, OP and Hans Jacob Polotsky, First Egyptologists in Jerusalem* (Cahiers de la revue biblique 49; ed. Krsysztof Modras; Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie Éditeurs, 2000); Landgráfová and Navrátilová, *Sex and the Golden Goddess*, 2009; John C. Darnell, “A Midsummer Night’s Succubus: The Herdsman’s Encounters in P. Berlin 3024, the Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling, the Songs of the Drinking Place, and the Ancient Egyptian Love Poetry,” in *Opening the Tablet Box: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Benjamin R. Foster* (eds. Sarah C. Melville and Alice L. Slotsky; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 99-140.

intercourse itself.<sup>522</sup> This statement about Amnon’s sexual frustration, by comparison, seems rather blunt and non-emotional. The expression “to do” could be a more crude way of referring to sex, as opposed to euphemistic “be” seen in 2 Samuel 13:20.<sup>523</sup> Judges 19:24 also uses the verb  $\sqrt{\text{śh}}$  in the context of sex when the Gibeonite host offers the mob his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine and tells the men that they can “debase them and *do* what you want to them” (‘*annû ’ôitām wa’ăšû lāhem haṭṭôb bē’ênêkem*), which certainly indicates rape, since the crowd wants to “know” ( $\sqrt{\text{yd}}$ ) the Levite and they “abuse” ( $\sqrt{\text{ll}}$ ) and “violate” ( $\sqrt{\text{nh}}$ ) his *pīlegeš* (Judg 19:25; 20:5). Likewise, the use of the verb  $\sqrt{\text{śh}}$  in 2 Samuel 13:2 could be the narrator’s hint about the coming violation. Thus even though Amnon pines away for Tamar like the speakers in love poems, the reason given for his dejection indicates that his goal is solely sexual satisfaction.

As a remedy to Amnon’s “lovesickness,” his friend Jonadab suggests a scheme whereby Amnon can be in close physical proximity to Tamar. Jonadab advises Amnon to feign illness and then, when David checks on him, to request that Tamar attend to him while he is sick.<sup>524</sup> This is a particularly appropriate deception since Amnon has already seemed ill by his languishing over Tamar. The idea of faking an illness and being

---

<sup>522</sup> See the discussions of Jerrold Cooper, “Gendered Sexuality in Sumerian Love Poetry” in *Sumerian Gods and their Representations* (eds. I.L. Finkel and M. J. Geller; Groningen: Styx, 1997), 85-97; cf. David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word*, 109-138.

<sup>523</sup> Tribble notes the repetition of the verb  $\sqrt{\text{śh}}$  and subtly alludes to a possible connection between  $\sqrt{\text{śh}}$  and rape (*Texts of Terror*, 41-42; 44).

<sup>524</sup> The Hithpael stem is used both when Amnon pretends to be ill in 2 Sam 13:6 and when he “makes himself sick” in his sexual frustration over Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:2. As is well known, the Hithpael often has a reflexive meaning, as seen nicely in 2 Samuel 13:2, since Amnon is essentially making himself sick from psychological distress. However, in 2 Samuel 13:6 the Hithpael stem has different nuance since Amnon is only giving the appearance of illness. A reflexive component can still be implied here, as Amnon is still “making himself” sick, if by appearance only.

“cured” by the presence of one’s beloved, presents yet another connection to ancient Near Eastern love poetry. In the Egyptian Papyrus Harris a male speaker says:

I will lie down inside,  
and then I will feign illness.  
Then my neighbors will enter to see,  
and then my sister will come with them.  
She’ll put the doctors to shame  
for she (alone) will understand my illness.<sup>525</sup>

However, instead of a tacit tryst for two lovers, the spurious sickness in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 results in rape. The speaker in Papyrus Harris deceives his neighbors, not his beloved, whereas the deception in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 is directed at Tamar. Moreover, the Egyptian love poem’s speaker imagines his beloved as surmising the situation immediately and knowing exactly how to “cure” her beloved, but in 2 Samuel 13:1-22, Tamar, obeying an order from her father, the king, assumes her visit to Amnon is innocent because it is her brother making the request. This element of feigned illness is an important part of the plot since it enables the rape to occur, and the subtle allusion to an element of love poetry serves to heighten the tension of the narrative. Thus, the story of Amnon and Tamar distorts language and motifs found in love poetry, giving them a sinister twist that emphasizes the horror of the sexual violence that is to come.

It is also worth noting that sibling terminology, which is so prevalent in 2 Samuel 13:1-22, was also employed in ancient Near Eastern love lyrics as terms of endearment. In ancient Near Eastern love poetry, the speaker often refers to their beloved as “brother” or “sister.” For example, in Song of Songs 4:9-5:1 the male speaker refers to his beloved several times as “my sister, my bride” ( *’ăḥōtî kallâ* ), and in one of the Cairo Love Songs, a male speaker says that the love of his “sister” makes him strong enough to cross a river

---

<sup>525</sup> After Fox, *Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 13.

full of crocodiles!<sup>526</sup> A Sumerian love poem speaks of the eyes and mouth of the woman delighting the male speaker with the refrain “come, my beloved sister.”<sup>527</sup> Sibling terminology appears to be a particular convention of ancient love songs, and the terms should not be interpreted literally.<sup>528</sup> Again, I do not wish to argue for direct dependence between ancient Near Eastern love poetry and 2 Samuel 13, but the repetition of sibling language in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 could be the utilization of a known literary trope with a sordid undertone since Amnon’s love interest is in fact his actual sister.

In the ancient Near East, love poetry comes from a scribal, non-political literary type. Therefore, it appears that love poetry language has been applied to a politically-oriented tale, clearly a different category. However, as David Carr has effectively shown, memorization was a major component of ancient scribal education that focused on “the oral-written mastery of a body of texts.”<sup>529</sup> The literary sophistication of the narrative of Amnon’s rape of Tamar and its function as “revision through introduction” would suggest the authorship of a high-level scribe<sup>530</sup> who could have incorporated tropes from

---

<sup>526</sup> Fox, *Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 32; Mathieu, *La Poésie Amoureuse de L’Égypt Ancienne*, 98.

<sup>527</sup> After Sefati, *CoS* 1: 541. See Yitzhak Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inana Love Songs* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998).

<sup>528</sup> Some examples make it clear that the speakers in the poems are not related. In Song of Songs 8:1-2, the female speaker wishes that her beloved could be like a brother to her, for then they could show public affection and she could bring him to her “mother’s house.” Moreover, in Papyrus Chester Beatty the male and female speakers seem to have interacted no more than by exchanging glances (cf. Fox, *Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 63), and there are familial and social obstacles to their love being consummated.

<sup>529</sup> See especially David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13. Regarding interconnections between various texts, he writes that “Israelite scribes most likely would have drawn on their verbatim memory of other texts in quoting, borrowing from, or significantly revising them” (161-162) and also speaks of the “scribal masters’ highly fluid use of preceding textual materials” (292).

<sup>530</sup> Milstein, “Revision through Introduction,” 35-36, argues that the authors responsible for literary revisions through introduction were likely master scribes. In discussing Carr’s memorization model for

love poetry in his account of a “love” story gone wrong. The inclusion of love poetry could seem to heighten the sense of how overwhelming Amnon’s feelings are. On one level, this would make the audience sympathetic to Amnon’s plight, but would then result in the audience becoming even more revolted by Amnon’s treatment of Tamar. Upon closer inspection, however, the narrative seems to subtly distort love poetry motifs. This not only foreshadows that all is not well, but also heightens the disturbing nature of Amnon’s actions.

### *Lying in Wait: Amnon’s Deception*

The narrative describes Amnon’s actions as fitting Jonadab’s suggestion almost exactly, except for the wording of Amnon’s request to David. Whereas in 2 Samuel 13:5 Jonadab instructs Amnon to request of David that Tamar make him some food using the general term *leḥem*, Amnon is more specific and asks that she make him *lēbibôt*, a rare word that is possibly a type of dumpling that might be a kind of comfort food for the sick (2 Sam 13:6).<sup>531</sup> However, since the root  $\sqrt{lb}$  also means “heart,”<sup>532</sup> Amnon employs an ironic double entendre in his request.<sup>533</sup> Moreover, as instructed by Jonadab, Amnon specifically requests to eat from Tamar’s hand (*wē’ebreh miyyādāh*); however, he uses

---

scribal education, she remarks: “If we take this to be true, this necessarily affects how we evaluate cases in the Bible of what appear to be allusions, type-scenes, or inner-biblical exegesis. Rather than assume that all of the parallels and/or subtle differences between two texts are purposeful and therefore require interpretation, it is possible that at least in some cases, these details are better explained by the memorization model: scribes drew on storehouses of memorized material as building blocks for expanding texts and producing new ones” (14).

<sup>531</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, 322.

<sup>532</sup> The denominative verb from the root  $\sqrt{lb}$  has erotic connotations, as in Song of Songs 4:9 “you have ravished me, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished me with one look from your eyes” (*libabīnī ’āḥōtī kallā libabīnī bē’āḥad mē’ēnayīk*).

<sup>533</sup> Cf. Anderson, *II Samuel*, 174; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 105-106; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 322.

the uncommon verb  $\sqrt{brh}$  for eating rather than Jonadab's generic  $\sqrt{'kl}$ . While this stipulation ensures that Tamar herself must attend Amnon rather than merely sending food to him, it is possible that there is another sexual double entendre present in this phrase which is perhaps a reason Amnon chooses the verb  $\sqrt{brh}$  instead of  $\sqrt{'kl}$ . Amnon directs this same phrase to Tamar in 13:10, commanding her to come into his inner chamber so he can “eat from[her] hand,” (*'ebreh miyyādēk*) and when Tamar obeys, he immediately grabs her and demands sex instead of food. The repetition of this phrase at key points in the narrative lends support to a secondary sexual meaning in both instances. In Hebrew and Ugaritic the term *yād* “hand” can be a euphemism for penis, as KTU 1.23 3-35, 1.4 iv 38-39, and Isaiah 57:8 attest.<sup>534</sup> However, a more probable sexual nuance associated with *yād* is the root  $\sqrt{ydd}$ , which means “love,” including sexual love.<sup>535</sup> Thus our author has Amnon using two words associated with sexuality, *lēbibôt* and *yād*, in his seemingly innocent request to David, imparting a secondary sexual nuance to his entire statement in 2 Samuel 13:6. On one level, Amnon requests that Tamar feed him by hand to nourish him during his illness, but on another level he expresses his desire for Tamar to revive him from his lovesick state through sexual gratification.

David, however, misses the sexual double meaning embedded in Amnon's request and falls for Amnon's ruse because he assumes it is innocent for a sister to nurse her sick

---

<sup>534</sup> There is one possible example where *yād* could refer to female genitalia: Isaiah 57:10b says “you have found the life of your ‘hand’” (*ḥayyat yādēk māšā't*), addressed to Judah personified as a woman, but it is unclear whether *yād* in this context is euphemistic for genitalia/sexual desire or figurative for renewed strength. Two verses earlier, Isaiah 57:8 *yād* clearly connotes male genitalia: “you have loved their bed, you have seen their ‘hand’” (*'āhabt miškābām yād ḥāzīt*)

<sup>535</sup> For example, Solomon's possible throne name *yēdīdyāh* means “loved one of Yahweh.” This root is also attested in Ugaritic, Aramaic and Arabic (for examples see *HALOT* 1:388). See discussion in Mark S. Smith and Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (Vol. 2; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 220.



brother.<sup>536</sup> He grants Amnon's request and sends for Tamar to attend the "invalid" because the ploy is set up to appear innocent to David by referring to Tamar as Amnon's sister. Both Jonadab's scheme to Amnon and Amnon's request to David specifically refer to Tamar as Amnon's "sister" (2 Sam 13:5-6), now claiming the close kinship that Amnon evaded when speaking to Jonadab in 2 Samuel 13:4. David, too, refers to the sibling relationship between Amnon and Tamar, calling Amnon Tamar's "brother" in 2 Samuel 13:7. When Tamar obeys her father's orders (2 Sam 13:8), the text again refers to Amnon as her brother, saying that she went to "the house of Amnon her brother" (*wattēlek tāmār bêt 'amnôn 'āhîhā*). Again the repeated use of sibling language highlights the betrayal of Tamar by her kinsmen.

Once Tamar arrives in Amnon's quarters, it seems that she cooks the dumplings in an outer room or area among other servants or attendants (2 Sam 13:8).<sup>537</sup> The text gives a rather detailed description of Tamar's cooking process (2 Sam 13:8-9): "she took dough, kneaded it, and made dumplings in his sight; then she boiled the dumplings and she took a pan and served him"<sup>538</sup> (*wattiqqah 'et-habbāšeq wattālāš wattēlabbēb*

---

<sup>536</sup> David is again tricked by Absalom's request for the sheep-shearing feast (2 Sam 13:23-27), and his request to go to Hebron to worship Yahweh (2 Sam 15:7-9). Additionally, David mistakes Nathan's parable (2 Sam 12:1-6) and the wise woman of Tekoa's ruse (2 Sam 14:1-11) for real legal cases. Moreover, when David tries to deceive Uriah to conceal the paternity of Bathsheba's pregnancy (2 Sam 11:6-13), he is unsuccessful. In the presentation of David before he was king, he himself is quite adept at deception and trickery, as seen in his plan for Jonathan to ascertain whether Saul intends to kill him (1 Sam 20) and David's taking refuge with Achish of Gath (1 Sam 21:10-15; 27:1-28:4). However, this does not necessarily indicate that he has become gullible or foolish. For example, in the Jacob cycle, where deception or trickery appears several times, the person who is tricked is not being critiqued: Isaac tricked by Jacob (Gen 21); Laban by Rachel (Gen 31); the town of Shechem by Jacob's sons, led by Simeon and Levi (Gen 34); Jacob by his sons regarding Joseph (Gen 37). If anyone is presented in a negative light in these tales, it is the trickster(s). Thus, Amnon's, and later Absalom's, deceptions of David present a critical view of David's sons, not of David as king.

<sup>537</sup> Based on Amnon's asking her to come into his inner chamber (*heder*) in 2 Samuel 13:10.

<sup>538</sup> From *yšq*, which means "pour out, dispense." I mean "serve" in the sense of "dish up," as Tamar is presenting the food she has prepared. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 322.

*lē'ēnāyw wattēbaššēl 'et-hallēbibôt wattiqqah 'et-hammašrēt wattišoq lēpānāyw*), a delay in plot action which heightens the suspense of the narrative. Though food preparation was a mundane responsibility for women in ancient Israel, food can also have erotic connotations.<sup>539</sup> Amnon's request for Tamar to make food in his viewing thus serves two purposes: to ensure Tamar's physical presence and also to increase Amnon's sexual arousal. Amnon is in a sense "feasting his eyes" on Tamar, though he will refuse to eat the food she makes. Tamar's cooking is described from the perspective of Amnon's sexual gaze.<sup>540</sup> Though, technically voyeurism constitutes secret viewing, Amnon's gaze is still voyeuristic in nature since his ulterior motives are unknown to Tamar.

Tamar is now in close proximity to Amnon; however, her spatial position and the presence of attendants will not allow him to accomplish his goal. Amnon then refuses to eat her food, orders everyone else out of his quarters, and tells Tamar to bring the food to him in his inner chamber (2 Sam 13:9-10). Since the audience knows of Amnon's ulterior motive for Tamar's attendance, it is obvious for the reader that Amnon's real objective is to get Tamar alone. The narrative has arrived at its critical point, the long and detailed description of Amnon's ruse having built up the suspense in the narrative.

### *Rape and Rejection*

When Tamar obeys Amnon's demand and enters his room in 2 Samuel 13:11, Amnon seizes her and says, "Come, lie with me, my sister" (*bô'î šikbî 'immî 'āhôtî*). While both verbs are in the imperative, the presence of the vocative softens the demand.

---

<sup>539</sup> Biblical examples include eating the fruit in Genesis 3:6-7 and the frequent references to food in the Song of Songs. See especially the work of Ken Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective* (Queering Theology; London: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>540</sup> Stone (*Sex, Honor, and Power*, 112) points out that the detailed description of Tamar's cooking results in the audience "seeing Tamar along with Amnon" (in italics).

As in the examples from ancient Near Eastern love poetry discussed above, it is possible that Amnon's address to Tamar as his "sister" could be another example of double entendre. While Tamar is literally his sister, Amnon probably utilizes the designation in this instance as a term of endearment, whether familial or romantic. Amnon's use of the vocative here certainly contrasts markedly with how he will address Tamar after the rape. At this point, it seems that Amnon expects that Tamar will consent or at least acquiesce to his desires.

However, Tamar strongly refuses, pleading with Amnon and giving several arguments in a vain effort to convince Amnon against illicit intercourse with her. She tells him (2 Sam 13:12-13):

"No, my brother, do not debase me, for such a thing is not done in Israel! Do not do this churlishness! For my part, where would I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the churls in Israel. But instead, speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you."

*'al- 'āhî 'al-tě 'annēnî kî lō'-yē 'āšeh kēn bēyisrā'ēl 'al-ta 'āšēh 'et-  
hannēbālā hazzō 't wa 'ānî 'ānā 'ōlik 'et-herpātî wē'attâ tihyeh kē'ahad  
hannēbālîm bēyisrā'ēl wē'attâ dabber-nā' 'el-hammelek kî lō' yimnā 'ēnî  
mimmekā*

Tamar's eloquent plea contains several important elements. First, just as Amnon calls her his sister in his demand for sex, Tamar refers to Amnon as her "brother," also using the vocative as she refuses him. This softens her refusal and further highlights the kinship between them. Tamar could be referring to consanguinity here, but at this point she more likely utilizes the term so that he will listen to her plea, emphasizing their familial relationship in order to persuade him. She tells him not to "debase" her using the term  $\sqrt{nh}$ . Although Tamar might see the possibility of rape under the circumstances, given that the basic meaning of  $\sqrt{nh}$  is "debase" or "humble," Amnon would degrade

her whether or not she consented. Though of course she does not want to be raped, what Tamar is pleading for is a legitimate sexual relationship that will not depreciate her social status.

Next, Tamar heightens the language to make her case, saying that “such a thing is not done in Israel” (*kî lō’-yē’āšeh kēn bēyisrā’ēl*) and imploring Amnon, “do not do this churlishness” (*’al-ta’āšēh ’et-hannēbālā hazzō’t*). Similar language to Tamar’s entreaty occurs in Genesis 34:7, the story of the rape of Dinah.<sup>541</sup> Dinah’s brothers are angry because, whether consensual or not, Shechem has had relations with their sister without the consent of her male relatives, and so “he did a churlish thing in Israel...a thing which ought not to be done” (*kî-nēbālā ’āsāh bēyisrā’ēl...wēkēn lō’ yē’āšeh*). Both narratives specifically reference Israel, though “Israel” signifies something different in each context (Jacob’s clan versus David’s kingdom). Tamar thus calls upon normative behavior specifically within the nation of Israel. The language of “in Israel” present in both Genesis 34:7 and 2 Samuel 13:12-13 suggests a political allusion and indicates that there will be political consequences. In the Genesis story, the decimation of the Shechemites is a denial of Israel’s potential intermixing with other kin groups. In the present text, the immediate implications seem to play out at the family level; however, this is the royal family. The familial conflict that begins with Amnon’s rape of Tamar will eventually result in Absalom’s revolt against David, in which he seems to have popular support.

Tamar then warns Amnon of the specific consequences for each of them. She attempts to evoke his sympathy by indicating the precariousness of her situation. In a literal translation, she asks rhetorically, “as for me, where could I make my shame go?” (*wa’ānî ’ānā ’ôlik ’et-herpātî*). Again, Tamar brings up the concern for social

---

<sup>541</sup> Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 322.

debasement embedded in an honor-shame society. She then appeals to Amnon's self-interest, cautioning him that he would be "like one of the churls in Israel" (*wě'attā tihyeh kě'ahad hannēbālīm bēyiśrā'ēl*), the same term used to describe Abigail's husband Nabal in 1 Samuel 25. If Tamar only alluded to political consequences for Amnon before, now she does so openly. She warns Amnon that if he has illicit relations with her, he will go from prince to pariah. A *nābāl* would not be the type of person who could ascend the throne, so according to Tamar's reasoning, if Amnon has illicit relations with her, he would disqualify himself from becoming king.

Surprisingly, Tamar concludes her entreaty with an alternative proposal, suggesting to Amnon that he ask David for her in marriage. Biblical legal texts generally condemn incest of any kind and specifically forbid sexual contact between brothers and sisters, including half siblings (Deut 27:22; Lev 18: 9, 11; Ezek 22:11). However, it is not known to what extent these texts reflect actual practice, particularly for the royal family. One of the wife-sister stories in Genesis presents Abraham and Sarah as half-siblings who are married (Gen 20:12),<sup>542</sup> but this should not be taken at face value, especially since in the other two wife-sister tales (Gen 12 and Gen 26:1-18) the patriarch seems to be lying outright that his wife is his sister. Moreover, these narratives' composition history, genre, and purpose make them difficult to compare to 2 Samuel 13:1-22, and as stories set in the remote past, they should not be used for determining cultural norms for marriage in ancient Israel.<sup>543</sup> Commentators have struggled with the

---

<sup>542</sup> Of the wife-sister tales, Genesis 20 is the most concerned about the moral implications for the patriarchs, which could be why it includes the information about Abraham and Sarah being half-siblings.

<sup>543</sup> For an argument that prohibitions against incest are not universal, see Paul Frandsen, *Incestuous and Close-Kin Marriage in Ancient Egypt and Persia. An Examination of the Evidence* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009).

questions of whether Tamar's suggestion indicates that marriage between a brother and sister would have been possible as well as whether Tamar's proposal is sincere or equivocating.<sup>544</sup> At the very least, it seems, Tamar would have had to offer an alternative that seemed believable, which suggests that such exceptions to the general rule could potentially be granted.

However, Tamar's entreaties go unheeded, for Amnon (2 Sam 13:14) "would not listen to her, and, as he was stronger than her, he raped her" (*wēlō' 'ābāh lišmoa' bēqôlāh wayyehēzaq mimmennā wayē'annehā wayyiškab 'otāh*).<sup>545</sup> Mentioning that Amnon was stronger than Tamar indicates that there was a physical struggle and establishes that Tamar both verbally refused Amnon's advances and physically resisted him. The report of the rape itself in the context of the narrative, particularly Tamar's preceding plea, emphasizes the violence and brutality involved. Until this point, it might have been possible to empathize with Amnon's unrequited passion for Tamar, but his actions in 2 Samuel 13:14 as well as afterwards depict him as a pitiless brute who utilizes his political, social and physical power over another in order to attain his desire.

After the rape, Amnon's intense lust for Tamar immediately reverses into absolute detestation described in 2 Samuel 13:15. His sudden and extreme change of heart is

---

<sup>544</sup> See McCarter (*II Samuel*, 323-324) who discusses four possible interpretations.

<sup>545</sup> The Hebrew uses two verbs,  $\sqrt{nh}$  "violate, debase, oppress" and  $\sqrt{škb}$  "lie, sleep," and accordingly, most translations reflect to verbs in English, rendering something like "he forced her and he lay with her/he violated her and lay with her/he lay with her by force" (so NKJ, NAS, NRSV, JPS, Hertzberg, Anderson, McCarter). Forced sexual intercourse is rape, and with such a clear context of rape in this story, the two verbs can be understood as a hendiadys and translated together into English as "rape." Moreover, a translation of rape better represents that the Hebrew has the direct object marker *'et* instead of the expected preposition *'im* "with" when the verb  $\sqrt{škb}$  refers to sexual intercourse. In 2 Samuel 13:11, in fact, Amnon requests that Tamar "lie with [him]" (*šikbi 'immi*), meaning that he wanted her to consent. When she refuses, she becomes the victim of sexual violence. She is the object of the action, not a participant. Tribble likewise comments, "the Hebrew omits the preposition to stress his [Amnon's] brutality" (*Texts of Terror*, 46). For further discussion of the Hebrew text and a compelling suggestion that the verb  $\sqrt{škb}$  was substituted for a verb later deemed obscene (possibly  $\sqrt{šgl}$ ), see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 317.

described in Hebrew with the opposing terms of “love” (√’*hb*) and “hate” (√’*śn*’).<sup>546</sup>

However, since Amnon never really “loved” Tamar, his reaction is better understood in terms of attraction and repulsion: “Then Amnon loathed her with a very great loathing; indeed, greater was the loathing with which he loathed her than the lust with which he lusted after her” (*wayyiśnā’ehā ’amnôn śin’ā gēdôlâ mē’ôd kî gēdôlâ haśśin’ā ’ăšer śēnē’āh mē’ahābâ ’ăšer ’ăhēbāh*). Amnon abruptly tells Tamar to “get up and get out” (*qûmî lēkî*). This time he does not soften the command by using the vocative but instead barks an order at her.

Again, Tamar refuses Amnon, saying in 2 Samuel 13:16 that sending her away (*lēšallēhēnî*) would be a “great evil” (*hārā’ā haggēdôlâ*), even worse than the great offense (*nēbālâ*) he committed by raping her. After she is raped, Tamar seems to assume that the proper recourse is for her to remain with Amnon, along the lines of the prescriptions in Exodus 22:16-17 and Deuteronomy 22:28-29 for a man who has sexual relations with an unbetrothed virgin and then must marry her and pay the bride-price to her father.<sup>547</sup> Tamar seems to expect that she should stay with Amnon and probably assumes that now Amnon will have to marry her regardless of consanguinity. This indicates that her suggestion for Amnon to appeal to the king (2 Sam 13:13) was in fact sincere. While to modern sensibilities it would be extremely cruel to force a rape victim to marry her rapist, from Tamar’s perspective this might be the only social recourse

---

<sup>546</sup> Similar language is used when Joab reprimands David for mourning Absalom’s death in 2 Samuel 19:7.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 324; Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 115. While not stated explicitly in the Dinah account in Genesis 34, it is implied from Shechem and Hamor’s negotiations with Jacob and his sons that culturally proper recourse in rape cases was for the rapist to marry the girl and to pay the bride-price to her father, as shocking as this might seem to the modern reader.

available to her.<sup>548</sup> By sending her away, Amnon would divest her of any option for a socio-economically “normal” family life. Remarkably, Tamar is focused more on her future options than Amnon's reprehensible actions. Tamar's focus on marriage to Amnon, both before and after the rape, changes the audience's attitude toward Amnon's desire throughout the entire narrative. It would appear that he could have married her and chose not to do so—in fact, he never intends any larger commitment to Tamar.

Once again, however, Amnon refuses to listen to Tamar. He calls for a servant<sup>549</sup> to throw “this” (*zō't*) out and bolt the door behind her (2 Sam 13:17). Contrary to many translations that render *zō't* as “this woman,” Amnon uses completely dehumanizing language for Tamar, referring to her, in her presence, by an inanimate demonstrative pronoun.<sup>550</sup> The normal Hebrew demonstrative for “this woman” would be *hā'iššā hazzō't*, but Amnon uses the third feminine singular demonstrative *zō't* by itself, meaning “this one” or “this thing.” Since the demonstrative refers to an actual person rather than an abstract concept, it is especially odd that the demonstrative lacks a personal referent. The wording of Amnon's command shows that he quite literally views Tamar as an object. In the space of a few verses, Tamar has gone from being Amnon's “sister” to less than a person in his eyes.

---

<sup>548</sup> Stone also considers that “it is not inconceivable that a woman would prefer to take advantage of the androcentric rationale” and marry her rapist rather than face an otherwise uncertain future (*Sex, Honor and Power*, 115).

<sup>549</sup> Narratively speaking, it is odd that Amnon suddenly has a servant within hearing range, considering that he orders all of his servants to leave before he rapes Tamar. A person so nearby would presumably hear all that transpires between Amnon and Tamar and yet offers no help to the daughter of the king.

<sup>550</sup> RSV, NRSV, JPS, NIV, NAS, McCarter (*II Samuel*, 315), Hertzberg (*I and II Samuel*, 321) all translate “this woman” but this is not a precise rendering of the Hebrew. Anderson (*II Samuel*, 171) has “this so-and-so,” trying to capture the impersonal feel of Amnon's command. Tribble (*Texts of Terror*, 48) also translates *zō't* as simply “this,” and writes, “She [Tamar] has become for him [Amnon] solely a disposable object...For Amnon, Tamar is a thing, a ‘this’ he wants thrown out. She is trash.”



### *The Politics of Subjectivity*

Though Amnon objectifies Tamar, the narrative gives her some subjectivity, a rarity for women in biblical narratives. It is particularly relevant that the narrative presents Tamar's perspective and gives her a distinct voice. This is entirely different from other biblical narratives where women are sexually victimized. In other examples, the woman is completely passive and voiceless. Dinah (Gen 34) and the Levite's concubine (Judg 19) never speak and have no characterization whatsoever. In the wife-sister tales (Gen 12:10-20; 20; 26:6-11), Sarah and Rebecca are completely passive and say nothing.<sup>551</sup> Finally, in the story of David's adultery in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, Bathsheba also appears passive and only speaks to give David the news that she is pregnant.<sup>552</sup> Why, then, is 2 Samuel 13:1-22 the only biblical narrative that includes the female victim's perspective?

The lack of the woman's perspectives in other biblical narratives of sexual violation sometimes makes it difficult to determine whether or not the narrative indicates rape, as with Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 11.<sup>553</sup> Providing Tamar's point of view demonstrates without ambiguity that she is raped. The narrative uses vocabulary often associated with rape (*√'nh*, *√hzq* and *√škb* in 2 Sam 13:14) and makes clear that Tamar resisted Amnon both verbally and physically (2 Sam 13:12-14). If the story were told without insight into Tamar's perspective, it might leave doubt as to whether or not the sexual encounter was consensual.

---

<sup>551</sup> This marks a striking contrast to their characterizations elsewhere in Genesis (Gen 16; 18; 21; 27) where they play quite active roles as mothers.

<sup>552</sup> Like Sarah and Rebekah, Bathsheba also appears more dynamic in her role as Solomon's mother in 1 Kings 1-2.

<sup>553</sup> See section 6.4 below, "Blaming Bathsheba."

Moreover, throughout the narrative Tamar is depicted as a dutiful and obedient daughter who follows the commands of her father and both of her brothers (2 Sam 13:7, 10, 20). Tamar is also portrayed as an upright citizen of David's kingdom in her plea to Amnon not to rape her. She points out the moral implications of an incestuous rape, twice using terms from the root *ʾnbl* and she also mentions Israel two times in her plea (2 Sam 13:12-13). Tamar is furthermore depicted as responding to the rape in a "correct" manner in that her reaction to her situation is reminiscent of biblical legal material.<sup>554</sup> By showing unequivocally that Tamar was raped and depicting her as the model daughter, sister, and citizen, the narrative inherently causes the reader to sympathize with her and to vilify Amnon.

Still, despite Tamar's having a strong voice and presence within 2 Samuel 13:1-22, which distinguishes her from most women in other biblical narratives, she is still a relatively two-dimensional character. For example, the narrative provides much more psychological insight into Amnon's character and motivations (2 Sam 13:1-2, 4, 15) than Tamar's. Rather, Tamar is a stock character, and this serves the purpose of the narrative. As the androcentric idealized persona of the perfect young woman, Tamar's characterization makes it impossible for readers of this story to blame the victim. Ultimately, the purpose of this narrative is to justify Absalom's fratricide by making his murder of Amnon seem warranted, and it accomplishes this in part by including Tamar's perspective and characterizing her as virtuous and Amnon as reprehensible. By empathizing with Tamar, the audience is horrified by Amnon's actions, making Absalom's murder of his brother understandable.

---

<sup>554</sup> Stone remarks that Tamar's reaction could be the "projection of an 'official' position via the voice of a female character," which is also my view (*Sex, Honor, and Power*, 115).

Throughout this story then, the primary relationship is between Amnon and Absalom, but always with David in view. This is why the narrative expertly delineates Amnon's character, causing the reader to sympathize with him at the beginning but then showing him to be utterly reprehensible. This sudden reversal in Amnon's characterization enhances the audience's feeling of repulsion for Amnon, which in turn will make Absalom's fratricide as well as David's forgiveness of Absalom more understandable.

#### *Aftermath: Crying and Silence*

Tamar responds to being forcibly removed from Amnon's quarters by putting ashes on her head (*wattiqqah tāmār 'ēper 'al-rō 'šāh*), tearing her long-sleeved gown (*ûkētōnet happassîm 'ăšer 'ālêhā qārā 'â*),<sup>555</sup> and placing her hand upon her head (*wattāšem yādāh 'al-rō 'šāh*), all of which indicate her intense grief (2 Sam 13:19). Rending her long-sleeved robe has further significance, for 2 Samuel 18 mentions that it was a specific robe worn by the virgin daughters of the king, and Tamar no longer fits this category. Tamar also cries for help as she walks away (*wattēlek hālôk wēzā 'āqâ*). Her call for help ( $\sqrt{z}$  'q) is the same response prescribed in Deuteronomy 22:23-27 for a betrothed woman to prove her innocence (with the by-form  $\sqrt{s}$  'q). While Tamar is not betrothed, her cry for help could also function in a similar manner, raising a public alert that she has been wronged by Amnon. She intends to bring shame upon the prince, if not for raping her, then at least for not marrying her.

---

<sup>555</sup> The text notes that Tamar wears a *kētōnet happassîm*, a garment worn by virgin daughters of the king, but its meaning is uncertain. The only other occurrence of the term is in Genesis 37:4 when Jacob gives a garment to Joseph, which incites his brothers' jealousy. For further discussion, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 323-326, and Adrien Janis Bledstein, "Tamar and the Coat of Many Colors," in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings* (2<sup>nd</sup> Series; ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 65-85.

Absalom, Tamar's full brother, immediately assesses the situation and asks her if Amnon has "been with [her]" (*hāyāh 'immāk*), a euphemism for sex (2 Sam 13:20).<sup>556</sup> Without giving Tamar a chance to respond, Absalom tells her to "keep silent" (*hahārīšī*) and not to "take it to heart" (*'al-tāšīti 'et-libbēk laddābār hazzeh*)<sup>557</sup> because Amnon is her brother (*'āhik hū*). Similarly, after Jacob finds out that Shechem has had relations with his daughter Dinah he "keeps silent" (*heḥērīš*) until his sons come back from tending livestock in the fields (Gen 34:5), at which point Jacob and his sons enter into negotiations with Hamor and Shechem. Likewise, we should probably understand Absalom's words to Tamar not just as an attempt to comfort her<sup>558</sup> but rather an indication that he will do his duty as her brother and seek retribution and even revenge for her dishonor.<sup>559</sup> Tamar's role in the narrative is concluded with the notice that she remains in Absalom's house a "desolate" or "unmarried" woman (*šōmēmā*),<sup>560</sup>

---

<sup>556</sup> The verb *√hyh* is used in another clearly sexual context in Genesis 39:10, the episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife "though she repeatedly spoke to Joseph, he would not listen to her, to lie with her, to be with her" (*wayēhī kēdabbērāh 'el yōsēp yōm yōm wēlō'-šāma ' 'ēlēhā liškab 'ešlāh lihyōt 'immāh*). Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 326.

<sup>557</sup> Jonadab uses the same language in 2 Sam 13:33 when he tells the king he is sure that not all the kings' sons are dead, only Amnon.

<sup>558</sup> Conroy (*Absalom, Absalom!*, 34-35) notes elements, such as the vocative "my sister" that "convey a tone of tenderness." Hertzberg (*II Samuel*, 324) remarks that Absalom gives her little comfort but that there wasn't much else to say, as her fate was sealed. Anderson (*2 Samuel*, 176) notes that Absalom's words seem inadequate except if understood that he intended to avenge his sister's honor.

<sup>559</sup> Stone (*Sex, Honor, and Power*, 118) uses anthropological evidence to argue that in honor-shame cultures brothers particularly guard their sisters' sexual purity. From a feminist perspective, Esther Fuchs (*Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, 204) notes in comparing Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13:1-22 that the brother's "protection" of his sister is often as bad as her abuse by the villain of the story.

<sup>560</sup> McCarter (*II Samuel*, 326) notes that this term applied to women can have the more neutral sense of unmarried, i.e. "neglected" or "barren."

demonstrating that Amnon's rape and rejection of Tamar totally divests her of a marriage and having her own family, as she remains a dependent of her brother Absalom.<sup>561</sup>

2 Samuel 13:21-22 shifts the focus from Tamar and Amnon to Absalom and David, the two main players in the larger context of Absalom's revolt. The text notes that David is very angry (*wayyihar lô mē'ôd*) about the rape of Tamar, but there is no indication that David demands any repercussions from Amnon (2 Sam 13:21).<sup>562</sup> The fact that David does not act and it is Absalom who takes vengeance upon Amnon is rather striking, especially since Tamar would have had diplomatic value for David. Both Ken Stone and Esther Fuchs have discussed the important roles brothers play in defending a sister's sexual purity. Fuchs points out the similar marginalization of the father figure in Genesis 34;<sup>563</sup> however, as Stone observes, in Genesis 34 Shechem attempts to rectify his improper actions towards Dinah's family, which is why Jacob takes no action and is angered by Simeon and Levi's gratuitous hostility. Amnon, however, makes no such overtures of appeasement, so retribution from David would make sense. From an anthropological standpoint, Stone argues that David, as father to Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom, was in an impossible situation within an honor-shame society and as a result could not take action.<sup>564</sup> Though perhaps David would arguably be in a paralyzing

---

<sup>561</sup> This seems in contrast with other women in the David Narrative, who are married more than once (Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba), so Tamar's desolation should be understood not because she cannot marry since she is no longer a virgin but because she is the victim of sexual violence.

<sup>562</sup> The fuller Septuagint, with the support of 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, provides the explanation that David "did not punish Amnon because Amnon was David's firstborn and he loved him" (reading *wl' 'šb 't rwḥ 'mnwn bnw ky 'hbw ky bkwrw hw'*), but this seems derivative. However, see the discussion of McCarter who argues for haplography with *wl'* at the beginning of verse 22 (*II Samuel*, 319-320).

<sup>563</sup> Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, 219-220.

<sup>564</sup> Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 117.

predicament if the only justified response to the situation was a death sentence,<sup>565</sup> as father and king, he had the power to enforce various repercussions, including forcing Amnon to marry Tamar. Rather, it seems significant to the overall narrative that it is Absalom, not David, who takes vengeance for Tamar's rape. David only plays a supporting role in 2 Samuel 13:1-22, seeming distant and removed compared to his portrayals elsewhere in 1 and 2 Samuel. His only direct speech is his brief command to Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:7.

Just as the story begins with Absalom, it ends by focusing on his reaction to the rape of his sister. 2 Samuel 13:22 states that Absalom “did not say anything to Amnon, bad or good, but Absalom hated Amnon because he raped Tamar, his sister” (*wěłō' - dibber 'abšālôm 'im- 'amnôn lēmērā' wě'ad-ṭôb kî-šānē 'abšālôm 'et- 'amnôn 'al-dēbar 'āšer 'innāh 'ēt tāmār 'āḥōtô*), which means that, at least initially, Absalom refrains from taking hostile action against Amnon.<sup>566</sup> Perhaps he was waiting for punishment from David which never came or perhaps he was biding his time until the right moment presented itself, but the narrative of Amnon's rape of Tamar ends with silence and inaction.

#### *Absalom: Tamar's Avenger?*

It is a full two years later (2 Sam 13:23) when Absalom finally takes vengeance against Amnon. He pesters David to allow all the king's sons, particularly Amnon, to join him at his sheep-shearing feast (2 Sam 13:23-27), and while there, Absalom has his

---

<sup>565</sup> Yet, David attempts to extradite Absalom for punishment in 13:39. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 344.

<sup>566</sup> J. Hoftijzer points out on the basis of Genesis 31:29, where Laban pursues Jacob, that the phrase “to not say anything good or bad” refers to physical harm rather than a verbal assault (“Absalom and Tamar: A Case of Fratriarchy?” in *Schrift en Uitleg, Festschrift W. H. Gispen* [Kampen: Kok, 1970], 54-61); cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 326.

servants strike and kill Amnon (2 Sam 13:28-29).<sup>567</sup> Afterwards Absalom flees to Geshur, where his maternal grandfather is the king and he can expect to receive asylum, and he remains in exile there for three years (2 Sam 13:37-39). At Joab's instigation, David allows Absalom to return to Israel (2 Sam 14:1-24). Initially, David will not receive Absalom (2 Sam 14:24, 28), but after two years the father and son become reconciled (2 Sam 14:28-33).

The amount of time that passes between Amnon's rape of Tamar and Absalom's "vengeance" makes Absalom's killing of Amnon appear more like detached political calculation than a wrathful act of vengeance. If he were only seeking to avenge Tamar's rape, he probably would have acted sooner, but by delaying two years, his actions appear to serve his own agenda more than avenge his sister's violation. Moreover, the sheep-shearing feast seems to have been merely a pretext for Absalom to have access to Amnon in a vulnerable position, since he specifically requests to David that Amnon attend the feast (2 Sam 13:26-27) and strikes Amnon once he is drunk on wine from the feast (2 Sam 13:28). Absalom does not even kill Amnon himself but orders his servants to do the deed, and then only after Amnon has become weakened by intoxication.<sup>568</sup>

Moreover, Absalom never states that he kills Amnon in order to avenge Tamar. Tamar's rape is mentioned only once in the account of Absalom's murder of Amnon, his exile from David and eventual reconciliation with his father (2 Sam 13:23-14:23). It comes, appropriately, from Jonadab, who realizes that the report of Absalom killing all of

---

<sup>567</sup> Absalom's intervention in place of David's possibly represents the beginning of his claim to legitimacy over David, as it seems to connect to Absalom's focus on usurping the role of judge in 2 Samuel 15:1-6.

<sup>568</sup> The language of "servants" (*n'r*) with regard to Absalom suggests a political player, a figure of some power.

David's sons is false and that only Amnon is dead (2 Sam 13:32): "for by the command of Absalom it has been determined from the day he violated his sister Tamar" (*kî- 'al-pî 'abšālôm hāyētâ šûmâ miyyôm 'annōtô 'ēt tāmār 'ăḥōtô*). Overall, however, the story of Amnon's rape of Tamar seems fairly divorced from the materials in 2 Samuel 13:23-14:23. For instance, the ruse of the wise woman of Tekoa (2 Sam 14:1-20) only mentions fratricide, not rape, and Tamar's rape is never mentioned throughout Absalom's revolt. Thus 2 Samuel 13:1-22 sets up Absalom's fratricide to look like vengeance, turning a cold-blooded murder into a justifiable homicide. Rather than truly avenging Tamar, Absalom appears to utilize his sister's rape as a pretext for eliminating a competitor to succeed to David's throne.<sup>569</sup>

Though the action of 2 Sam 13:1-22 revolves mainly around Amnon and Tamar, Absalom is the real focus of the larger narrative. Amnon's rape of Tamar comprises the beginning of the account of Absalom's revolt and explains the deterioration of the relationship between David and Absalom with the purpose of presenting David's forgiveness of Absalom's fratricide as justified.<sup>570</sup> Amnon's sexual violation of Tamar carries political consequences not only for Amnon, but for Absalom, David, and ultimately Israel. It is significant that the account of Absalom's revolt, probably the biggest threat during David's reign, is blamed on a sexual crime. Amnon is vilified in the narrative, showing him unfit to succeed David. However, while this story is immediately

---

<sup>569</sup> But if 2 Samuel 13:1-22 is a later prologue, a "revision through introduction," this would suggest that the more standard tradition was that Absalom had his brother killed in order to clear his way to the throne.

<sup>570</sup> A similar goal is probably at work in 2 Samuel 14, which emphasizes both that David had to be seriously persuaded to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem and even afterwards still had to be convinced to forgive him.



sympathetic to Absalom, in the larger revolt narrative context he appears in a more critical light, exploiting his father's apparent mildness and forgiveness.

#### **6.4. *David and Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25***

Probably the best known story involving sexuality in the David Narrative is found in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, the episode involving Bathsheba and Uriah. King David has sex with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, who becomes pregnant, and after his attempts at covering up the adultery fail, David arranges for Uriah to be killed in battle (2 Sam 11:2-27). Because of these atrocious actions, David is cursed by Yahweh through the prophet Nathan, and the child born to David and Bathsheba dies (2 Sam 12:1-23). However, David and Bathsheba have another son, Solomon, who will ultimately succeed David as king (2 Sam 12:24-25).<sup>571</sup>

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, I regard 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 as relatively later than the other texts that explicitly mention sexual relations. This narrative is connected literarily to 2 Samuel 13:1-22 and 2 Samuel 16:20-23, particularly through Nathan's oracle against David (2 Sam 12:1-15). In 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 we have yet another example of "revision through introduction," which frames the long account of Absalom's revolt against David in an entirely different light. The earlier revolt narrative stresses David's mildness and paternal love for his sons and presents Amnon and Absalom as disappointing sons who exploit their father's good nature. With the addition of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, however, the failings of David's sons are blamed upon David's egregious offenses.

---

<sup>571</sup> The Book of Chronicles omits the entire episode but lists "Bathshua" as Solomon's mother in 1 Chronicles 3:5.

It is striking to see a later writer add a critical component to a narrative for a heroic figure, especially the great founding king. Whenever the date of the composition, or whatever its intended purpose, it is significant that David's wrongdoing is sexual in nature. Sex is already part of the David story received by the writer of the Bathsheba account, yet it is never sex by David. The stories of David's rise to power present his early sequence of marriages without an interest in sexuality as being central to the narrative. In the account of his reign, sex swirls around David, especially in the power plays among his sons, but David himself is never directly involved. The story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah stands in marked contrast to the general presentation of David up to this point in the narrative of Samuel, which defends any possible wrongdoing on David's part by explaining his innocence or providing insight into his intentions or feelings. Instead, 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 presents David's actions without any attempt at explanation or apology. Yet, despite the portrayal of David's illicit actions, the narrative does not delegitimize him as king.

### *The Setting of the Narrative*

The Bathsheba-Uriah tale is framed by the account of war with the Ammonites. The *casus belli* of this conflict is the emasculating humiliation suffered by David's messengers, and thereby meant for David himself, at the hands of Hanun of Ammon (2 Sam 10). When the story begins, David's troops have already defeated the Aramean part of the Ammonite-Aramean coalition and are currently engaged in "destroying" the Ammonites (*wayyašhitû 'et-bēnê 'ammôn*) and besieging the Ammonite capital of Rabbah (2 Sam 11:1).<sup>572</sup> David, however, remains in Jerusalem, leaving his general Joab

---

<sup>572</sup> Rost saw this verse as part of the framework into which the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah was inserted and his argument has largely been followed (*The Succession to the Throne of David*, 57-62).

in charge of the war efforts. The information that David remained in Jerusalem is not by itself necessarily a critique of the king.<sup>573</sup> Realistically, ancient Near Eastern kings could not have been present on every military campaign, though symbolically and ideologically the king was the head of the army. In the preceding account of war with the Ammonite-Aramean coalition, it is Joab and Abishai who win the first battle (2 Sam 10:8-14) and only then does David lead his troops to victory over Hadadezer to eliminate the Aramean threat (2 Sam 10:15-19). Likewise, after the events in 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25, Joab sends a message to David that Rabbah is about to fall and David goes to the battlefield to claim the victory as his own (2 Sam 12:26-31).<sup>574</sup> Moreover, no king appears to be present in the battle between the House of Saul and the House of David in 2 Samuel 2:12-32.

However, the spatial juxtaposition between David and his troops is central to the narrative of 2 Samuel 11.<sup>575</sup> It is the distance between king and army that makes David's adultery with Bathsheba possible in the first place, and the plot of 2 Samuel 11 involves first Uriah and then a messenger of Joab going back and forth between Rabbah and

---

<sup>573</sup> Those who view the scenario of David staying in Jerusalem during wartime as an implicit critique include: Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 35; Stone, *Sex, Honor and Power*, 95; McKenzie, *King David*, 156-57; Ridout, "Prose Compositional Techniques," 152-53; Gunn, *King David*, 70; Veijola, "Salomo—Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas," in *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 30; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 240. Some see it as intentionally ironic: Yee, "Fraught with Background," 242-43; Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992; orig. 1965), 35-36; Meir Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 193-196; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 76. However, others see it as neutral: Peter Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 100; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 153; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 285; Van Seters, *Biblical Saga of King David*, 290; Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 453.

<sup>574</sup> Originally these two battle accounts stood together, but the author of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 made use of the information that David remained in Jerusalem during the siege as an appropriate place to insert this episode. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 285.

<sup>575</sup> Cf. Mieke Bal who argues that David remaining in Jerusalem is one of several examples of "spatial opposition" which underlie the entire narrative (*Lethal Love*, 23-24); J. P. Fokkelman also discusses the importance of spatial relationships, what he calls "chiasmus of distance" in his analysis of the story, though he does not discuss David staying behind from battle as an example (*Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, Vol. 1, 57).

Jerusalem. Moreover, the contrast between the comforts of home and the harsh conditions of the battlefield is emphasized in Uriah's refusal to go to his house while he is in Jerusalem (2 Sam 11:11), which could indicate that David's physical location in Jerusalem instead of the battlefield is a point of criticism for the narrative. As the narrative now stands, the information that David remains in Jerusalem while his army besieges Rabbah is not by itself a critique of David but is an integral part of a story that presents a critical view of the king.

#### *David and Bathsheba*

One day around dusk (*la 'ēt hā 'ereb*),<sup>576</sup> David rises from his bed and “walks around” (*wayyithallēk*) upon the roof (*gag*) of his palace (2 Sam 11:2). From David's vantage point he is able to see a woman bathing, and the text explicitly mentions that “the woman was very good-looking” (*wēhā 'iššā tōbat mar'eh mē'ōd*). The Hithpael of the root  $\sqrt{h}lk$  is used to describe David's rooftop stroll. As the Hithpael can have an iterative meaning, the Hithpael of  $\sqrt{h}lk$  often has the sense of “walk about” or of walking “back and forth,” an appropriate description for someone walking on a roof.<sup>577</sup> However, it is perhaps possible that the Hithpael has an additional nuance in 2 Samuel 11:2. Several

---

<sup>576</sup> That is, when the sun is going down, based on cognates in Ugaritic *'rb špš* and Akkadian *ereb* <sup>d</sup>*šamši*. The exact time of day is unclear from the text, though one might assume that for David to be able to see Bathsheba and discern that she was very beautiful the sun had not yet completely set. Cf. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 309; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 285; and Ackroyd, who explains the term as “after the afternoon rest during the hottest part of the day” (*II Samuel*, 100). According to Daniel Fleming, personal communication, in the Emar rituals evening (*nubattu*) was a crucial time for ritual activity, particularly during the time of transitional light with the rise of a full moon (*zukur*). This time of day may also be a good time for people to be active, when it is not too hot and can enjoy the breeze of a roof. See idem, *Time at Emar: The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner's Archive* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

<sup>577</sup> Cf. Genesis 3:8 (God “walks around” in the garden); Exod 21:19 (a man “walks around” outside, showing himself to be uninjured); Job 22:14 (God “walks around” in the heavens), 38:16 (God questions Job if he has ever “walked around” in search of the depths); Est 2:11 (Mordecai “paces” in front of the courtyard of the harem to learn of Esther's welfare).

occurrences of the Hithpael of  $\sqrt{hlk}$  also describe individuals surveying a particular area (Gen 13:17; Joshua 18:4; 8; Zech 1:10-11; cf. 6:7; Job 1:7, 2:2). The image of a king surveying his city also occurs in Daniel 4, describing Nebuchadnezzar, and the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic (SB version, ii, 7). Based upon these examples, the description of David walking “back and forth” on the palace roof could suggest that he was surveying the area around his palace.

Considering that what he sees while he surveys the city from his palace roof is a beautiful woman bathing, it is possible that this was the very purpose of David’s rooftop stroll and gives additional nuance to the iterative use of the Hithpael stem of  $\sqrt{hlk}$  here. Graeme Auld has pointed out the repetition of the Hithpael of  $\sqrt{hlk}$  in 1 Samuel 23-30, when David is “roaming” around the Judean Negev (1 Sam 23:13, 25:15, 25:27, 30:31). He remarks, “David when roaming had ‘form’: predatory and unscrupulous” and further points out that during this time David also gained two wives.<sup>578</sup> If this is the case, David could be understood as more than an accidental voyeur—he could be viewed as a sexual predator.<sup>579</sup> However, David’s location, both generally in Jerusalem and specifically on his palace roof, are not in themselves inherently negative.

As depicted in the Bible, rooftops are used for various purposes both in the urban and in the village dwellings, including food storage (Josh 2), upper-level chambers (Judg 3:20; 1 Kgs 17:19,23; 2 Kgs 4:10), and sleeping (1 Sam 9:25). Rooftops as a place used for the activities of daily life is also apparent from the Deuteronomic law that prescribes

---

<sup>578</sup> Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 454.

<sup>579</sup> This idea was first suggested to me by Theodore J. Lewis, personal communication. Cf. Coogan who questions whether David might be viewed as a “peeping Tom” here (*God and Sex*, 105). Randall C. Bailey interprets the use of Hithpael as indicating to the reader that “some questionable conduct is about to occur” (*David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10-12* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 86).

that parapets should be placed on the roof when building a new house to prevent people from falling (Deut 22:8). Roofs would have been flat, open spaces with access to cooler air and away from the smells of animals, cooking, and offal.<sup>580</sup> It seems, then, that rooftops would have been acceptable locations for an early evening stroll or even a bath.

While it is impossible to know the exact setting the writer had in mind,<sup>581</sup> the palaces of ancient Near Eastern cities often stood on higher ground than surrounding dwellings, making it easier for David to see Bathsheba since his position was vertically higher than hers. Though the text makes it clear that David is on his roof, it does not specify exactly where Bathsheba is bathing. Though it is often assumed that she is bathing also on the roof of her house, it is just possible that, from his higher vantage point, David views Bathsheba bathing in her courtyard or even in another room of her house.<sup>582</sup> Both a room of a house or the top of a roof seem like acceptable locations for a bath, though the former possibility suggests more privacy, which would weaken arguments that view Bathsheba's bath as a form of flirting or seduction (discussed further below).

The description of David viewing of Bathsheba is voyeuristic on two levels: both the male character and the audience are voyeurs of a naked woman, who, the narrative

---

<sup>580</sup> For a discussion of the archaeological data see Phillip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 34-35; Oded Borowski, *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 18-19; Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 485-486.

<sup>581</sup> Little remains archaeologically dating to the time of David, though Jerusalem was rather small until the mid-eighth century BCE. However, if the story is later it could reflect a view of Jerusalem applicable to that time period.

<sup>582</sup> Cf. Oded Borowski, *Daily Life in Biblical Times*, 78; Sara M. Koenig, *Isn't This Bathsheba?*, 34-37.

makes clear, is “very beautiful.”<sup>583</sup> Feminist critics have utilized the Lacanian concept of the Gaze to highlight the objectification of women by an assumed male viewer/subject. Written millennia before Lacan, these narratives highlight the power disparity between subject and object, voyeur and viewed. King David viewing Bathsheba from the roof of his palace represents the difference in their social standings and David’s power relative to Bathsheba’s. His position supersedes hers in multiple ways—gender, social standing, spatial position,<sup>584</sup> and access to information.<sup>585</sup> He is the all-powerful subject and she the silent, passive object.

David then “sends”<sup>586</sup> someone<sup>587</sup> to inquire about the woman he has seen bathing (*wayyišlah dāwid wayyidroš lā’iššā*). It is reported to David that the identity of the woman in question is (2 Sam 11:3): “Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, wife of Uriah the Hittite” (*bat-šeb’ bat-’ēlī’am ’ēšet ’ūrīyāh haḥittī*). This is the only time in the episode

---

<sup>583</sup> Alice Bach (*Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*, 130-140) and J. Cheryl Exum (*Fragmented Women*, 170-189) discuss voyeurism on the part of the male characters, the (male) writer, and the reader in story of David and Bathsheba.

<sup>584</sup> Cf. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 309; Michael Coogan, *God and Sex*, 105.

<sup>585</sup> David is able to find out Bathsheba’s identity very quickly (2 Sam 11:3).

<sup>586</sup> The verb *šlh* is used repeatedly in 2 Samuel 11 in David’s dealings with both Bathsheba and Uriah. David “sends a messenger or messengers (with a word),” to inquire about Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3); to “take” Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:4); to order Joab to send Uriah to Jerusalem (2 Sam 11:6); to send Uriah back to the battlefield (2 Sam 11:12); to order Joab to have Uriah killed in battle, with Uriah as the messenger (2 Sam 11:14-15); and to bring Bathsheba to be his wife after Uriah is killed (2 Sam 11:27). David also receives messages which are “sent” to him. Bathsheba “sends a messenger (with a word)” to David informing him that she is pregnant (2 Sam 11:5), and Joab also “sends a messenger (with a word)” to David informing him of the siege progress and of Uriah’s death (2 Sam 11:18-24). When other characters “send a messenger (with a word)” to David, it is to provide him with information, but when David “sends a messenger (with a word)” it is to deliver a direct order from the king. However, in 2 Samuel 12 it is Yahweh, the divine king, who “sends” the prophet Nathan (with a word) to indict David for his wrongdoing and to inform him of his punishment. See further, Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World* (HSM 45; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), esp. 37-42.

<sup>587</sup> David presumably speaks to a messenger here, though it is not clearly narrated. David explicitly “sends” (*wayyišlah*) messengers (*mal’ākīm*) in 2 Samuel 11:4. However, Randall C. Bailey (*David in Love and War*, 87) suggests that it is David who is speaking, with the implication that David recognizes Bathsheba and is confirming that the woman he sees from the palace roof is indeed her.

that Bathsheba's name is mentioned. The rest of the episode she is referred to as "the woman" belonging to Uriah or by feminine pronouns. Only in 2 Samuel 12:24, after Nathan has cursed David and his first son with Bathsheba has died, is her name again mentioned, but the text makes clear that Bathsheba is now David's wife (*wayēnahēm dāwid 'ēt bat-šeba 'ištô*) and the context is the conception of Solomon.

It is rare in biblical narrative for a named woman to be identified by both her father and her husband. Wives who are named in biblical narratives are usually identified by their husband, not their father (e.g., Deborah, Jael, Abigail, Huldah). However, in the David Narrative Michal is identified as Saul's daughter after her marriage to David. Rizpah is also named and doubly identified as *pīlegeš* of Saul and the daughter of Ayyah. Feminist scholars have argued for the importance of women characters being named in biblical narratives, pointing out the prevalence of examples of unnamed women in the Hebrew Bible. It is remarkable, then, to see Bathsheba not only named, but further identified by both her father and husband. This would seem to suggest that Bathsheba's father is important, though he does not figure into the narrative. Perhaps this lineage is important somehow for Solomon's genealogy. According to the list of warriors in 2 Samuel 23:34, there was among the "Thirty" (*šēlōšîm*), David's elite band of warriors listed in 2 Samuel 23, a certain "Eliam, son of Ahitophel the Gilonite" (2 Sam 23:34). If this Eliam is the same man as Bathsheba's father, then this would make Bathsheba Ahitophel's granddaughter. It would also make Uriah and Bathsheba's father contemporaries in age and social status. However, this possibility is not at all certain.<sup>588</sup>

---

<sup>588</sup> Assuming that Bathsheba is in fact Ahitophel's granddaughter allows for various speculative interpretations: Bailey (*David in Love and War*, 87-90) suggests that Bathsheba and David struck a marriage deal that would improve her status as the granddaughter of a rebel and would ingratiate David with southern Judahites loyal to Ahitophel. Halpern (*David's Secret Demons*, 402-403) argues that



Uriah's identity is also an issue in the interpretation of the narrative. Uriah's designation as a "Hittite" indicates his non-Israelite ethnic origins but not necessarily that he was a foreigner or a mercenary.<sup>589</sup> He has a Yahwistic name ( 'ûrîyâ, "Yah[weh] is my light"), which suggests full membership into the Israelite community, and Uriah's words to David in 2 Samuel 11:11 certainly seem to exhibit adherence to the nation at large. In 2 Samuel 11 Uriah is depicted as a loyal soldier. As David's personal guard is mostly made up by men of non-Israelite origins, it is possible that he is part of this group. In 2 Samuel 23:38 he is also listed among the Thirty, where he is also referred to as a "Hittite," though, as his name comes at the end, it could have been added later.<sup>590</sup> Uriah's potentially non-Israelite origins would have made him even more dependent on David as monarch, which would further underscore David's betrayal of a subject.

Whatever the backgrounds of Bathsheba and Uriah, the important element for the story is that Bathsheba already belongs to another man. However, the information about Bathsheba's identity and marital status does not hinder David from using his power as king to satisfy his lust. He summons Bathsheba to the palace and has sex with her when she arrives. The description of events is very sparse and full of action verbs: "David sent messengers and took her; she came to him and he lay with her" (2 Sam 11:4). David

---

Solomon was really Uriah's son and suggests that Ahitophel joined Absalom's revolt in exchange for Solomon's preferment. Hertzberg (*I and II Samuel*, 309-310) also assumes that Bathsheba is Ahitophel's granddaughter and that David must have known her already.

<sup>589</sup> Blenkinsopp ("Theme and Motif in the Succession History," 52, n.4) notes that Uriah was Hurrian, possibly Gibeonite. McCarter (*II Samuel*, 285) suggests that Uriah was probably ethnically Aramean, as were most of the Neo-Hittites and Ackroyd (*II Samuel*, 101) says that his Yahwistic name suggests he was a "full member of the community," but the point is to contrast the piety of the alien resident with the corruption of the king. However, Halpern (*David's Secret Demons*, 93) and Fuchs (*Sexual Politics*, 126) view Uriah as a socially marginalized figure, a foreign mercenary without lineage or political importance.

<sup>590</sup> Several other members of the "Thirty" seem to also be of non-Israelite status, as we might expect from David.

“sends” (*wayyišlah*) messengers who, under his authority, “take” (*wayyiqqāhehā*)

Bathsheba. In Samuel’s speech in 1 Samuel 8:11-18, the prophet describes kings as those who “take” (*√lqh*), who appropriate their subjects’ persons and possessions for their own use, and here David in fact “takes” (*√lqh*) Bathsheba, his loyal soldier’s wife, for his own pleasure.<sup>591</sup>

Summoned under royal guard, Bathsheba “comes” from her house to David’s palace (*wattābô’ ’ēlāyw*), and he “lies with her” (*wayyiškab ’immāh*). As with most narrated sexual episodes in the Bible, the description is minimal. The point is not the sexual encounter itself but what results from it. The text explicitly and unambiguously makes clear that sexual relations occurred because this information is crucial to the plot. Unlike the other two pericopes in this section in which the sexual offense is the main point of the episode, here the narration of sexual activity serves as the introduction to the main narrative. The narration of adultery and the resulting pregnancy only takes up four verses and is told in terse style, whereas the main plot of the story, David’s attempted cover-up of his adultery, his order for Uriah to be killed, and the resulting curse by Nathan and subsequent death of David and Bathsheba’s son is lively and full of dialogue.

Immediately after the sexual encounter in 2 Samuel 11:4 the text then notes that Bathsheba was “purified from her uncleanness” (*wēhî’ mitqaddešet miṭṭum ’ātāh*). This information is most likely included here not to address issues of cultic purity or to suggest that Bathsheba bathed a second time, but rather to indicate that the reason for Bathsheba’s bathing in 2 Samuel 11:2 was to cleanse herself from the ritual impurity incurred during menstruation, which proves that David must be the father of the child and

---

<sup>591</sup> See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 290, who makes the connection to 1 Samuel 8:11-18 as part of his argument that 2 Samuel 11-12 is not part of the Succession Narrative but came from a later prophetic redactor.

not Uriah.<sup>592</sup> Bathsheba then returns to “her house” (*bêtāh*), which is of course also Uriah’s house.<sup>593</sup> This information suggests that once David had satisfied his lust he expected Bathsheba to return to her position as Uriah’s wife.<sup>594</sup> It seems that at this point he had no wish to acquire her permanently. However, she soon sends word to David that she is pregnant (2 Sam 11:5), and this drastically changes the situation.<sup>595</sup>

### *Blaming Bathsheba*

Various scholars have speculated about whether Bathsheba might have intended for David to see her bathing and/or acted as a willing participant in adultery with the king.<sup>596</sup> According to this viewpoint, by bathing where David was able to see her, she caused him to lust after her. This reading would make 2 Samuel 11 a story of exhibitionism rather than voyeurism and also consensual adultery rather than rape. However, as discussed above, the location of Bathsheba’s bath is not at all clear.

---

<sup>592</sup> For a discussion of other interpretations, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 286.

<sup>593</sup> It is David’s objective to persuade Uriah to go to “his house” while he is in Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 11:6-13.

<sup>594</sup> Exum (*Fragmented Women*, 175) notes that the text does not mention David having sexual relations with Bathsheba again until after she becomes his wife and their first child dies.

<sup>595</sup> Exum (*Fragmented Women*, 190) and Lillian R. Klein (“Bathsheba Revealed,” in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel-Kings*, 50-51) see Bathsheba’s body “speaking” in her pregnancy as indicative of her increased power in the narrative situation. I disagree with this interpretation and view Bathsheba’s pregnancy as increasing her vulnerability and passive object of David’s political and sexual machinations. In fact, David could have had Bathsheba secretly killed to cover up the adultery instead of Uriah (Theodore J. Lewis, personal communication).

<sup>596</sup> Karl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880), 383; Bailey, *David in Love and War*, 84-90; Whybray, *Succession Narrative*, 86; Blenkinsopp, “Theme and Motif in Succession History,” 52; A. Schultz, *Das zweite Buch Samuel* (Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 8/2; Münster: Aschendorff, 1920; 114); Erich Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 1 (University of Missouri, 2001), 261- 263; Ackroyd, *II Samuel*, 105; Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 310; Klein, “Bathsheba Revealed,” 47-64; Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, “Slingshots, Ships, and Personal Psychosis: Murder, Sexual Intrigue, and Power in the Lives of David and Othello,” in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible* (Semeia Studies 44; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 59.

The interpretations that view Bathsheba as a consenting partner to adultery also focus on the verbs *wattābô* ‘“she came” and the prepositional phrase *‘immāh* “with her” in their arguments.<sup>597</sup> Randall Bailey claims that since Bathsheba is the subject of the verb *wattābô* ‘“she came,” and it is in the Qal rather than the Hiphil stem, this demonstrates that she has agency within the story and makes the choice to commit adultery with the king. However, he does not address the Septuagint’s *kai eisēlthen pros autēn*, which reflects *wyb’ lyh* “he went into her” with David as the subject instead of Bathsheba. Even if the MT is the original reading, the text portrays David as issuing a royal summons with messengers who physically retrieve her (*√lqh* “take” or even “seize”). Moreover, as Moshe Garsiel has pointed out, since Bathsheba does not know the reason David has summoned her, she should not be faulted for obeying the king’s command and going to the palace.<sup>598</sup> Bailey also suggests that the preposition *‘im* “with” in the phrase “he slept (i.e. had sex) with her” suggests a reciprocal relationship in which Bathsheba must have been an active participant.<sup>599</sup> While it is the case that 2 Sam 13:14 and Gen 34:2, two narratives about rape, use the direct object marker *’ēt* with the verb *√škb*, Deuteronomy 22:25, the case of a man who has intercourse with a betrothed woman in the countryside, uses *‘im* with *√škb*, and this situation is understood by the text as rape.

---

<sup>597</sup> See especially Bailey, *David in Love and War*, 88, who is followed by Klein, “Bathsheba Revealed,” 49. Also see Kim and Nyengele, “Murder S/He Wrote? A Cultural and Psychological Reading of 2 Samuel 11–12,” in *Pregnant Passion*, 102.

<sup>598</sup> Moshe Garsiel, “The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 256.

<sup>599</sup> Bailey, *David in Love and War*, 88.

Bathsheba's point of view is completely absent from the narrative, which is solely concerned with David's desires and actions.<sup>600</sup> Her intentions cannot be discerned from the text. However, though the narrative is not interested in Bathsheba's perspective even to suggest wrongdoing on her part, a couple of textual examples could potentially indicate that she should be understood as innocent. The note in 2 Samuel 11:4 suggests that Bathsheba was performing ritual ablutions after the end of her menstrual cycle, which would frame her in a positive light and suggest her innocence. Rather than an attempt to arouse the king, Bathsheba's bathing is an example of proper ritual procedure. Moreover, in Nathan's parable in 2 Samuel 12:1-4 (discussed in more detail below), the ewe-lamb that is slaughtered represents Bathsheba, which could suggest her innocence. The parable indicates that the main players in the narrative are David and Uriah, represented as humans in the parable, not Bathsheba, who is symbolized by an animal.<sup>601</sup> Moreover, the ewe-lamb certainly does nothing to incite the rich man to slaughter it. Rather, the ewe-lamb is a hapless victim, and this symbol suggests that the narrator chooses to portray Bathsheba as equally guiltless. It is the intent of the narrator to portray Bathsheba as a passive object, not an active agent;<sup>602</sup> she is a background character, which is why her point of view is not relevant.<sup>603</sup> Precisely because

---

<sup>600</sup> Cf. Fokkelman, *King David*, 53. For Exum, this is how Bathsheba is literarily "raped" (*Fragmented Women*, 170-200).

<sup>601</sup> Cf. Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor and Power*, 102-103.

<sup>602</sup> Bathsheba plays a much more active role in 1 Kings 1-2, though there she is completely desexualized, appearing as a mother figure. According to Fuchs, *Sexual Politics*, 116-176, this dichotomy is consistent with biblical characterizations of wives and mothers.

<sup>603</sup> See Berlin, "Characterization in Biblical Narrative," 73, who views Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 as "a complete non-person...not even a minor character but part of the plot."

Bathsheba's perspective is omitted, I regard David's sexual relations with Bathsheba as coercive.<sup>604</sup>

The differences in social standing between David and Bathsheba in the story could at least suggest at least a "power rape" on David's part.<sup>605</sup> The narrative in 2 Samuel 11 portrays David as a king who does not hesitate to exercise his will upon the bodies' of his subjects. David's authority as king in relation to Bathsheba suggests that she would have very little choice but to acquiesce to his demands. In fact, Uriah loses his life because he refuses to follow David's suggestion. Moreover, Bathsheba is in a particularly vulnerable position since her husband is away fighting David's war. As monarch and symbolic head of the army, David would have been ideologically responsible for seeing that his soldiers' land and family were protected while they were away at battle. He was also supposed to be the upholder of the law, the final authority in judicial cases. Instead, David uses his power as king to "take" (*√lqh*) one of his soldiers' wives, violating what he is supposed to protect.

There is nothing intrinsically negative about either David's or Bathsheba's locations or activities. The problem lies in David wanting to possess what he sees and then in using his power to take what he wants. This is the inverse of the image of a just king, who his subjects rather than preying upon them.

---

<sup>604</sup> The possibility of rape is also raised by Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 170-172; 200; Bal, *Lethal Love*, 11; and Yee, "Fraught with Background," 243, and Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 194-195.

<sup>605</sup> See Richard M. Davidson, "Did King David Rape Bathsheba? A Case Study in Narrative Theology," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17/2 (Autumn 2006): 81-95, who defines "power rape" as a situation in which "a person in a position of authority abuses that "power" to victimize a subservient and vulnerable person sexually, whether or not the victim appears to give 'consent'" (89). Kim and Nyengele ("Murder S/He Wrote," 111-114) also raise the possibility of "power rape." Cf. Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament* (Abingdon Press, 1994), 144-155 and Garsiel, "Story of David and Bathsheba," esp. 253-256, seem to suggest the idea of "power rape" without using the term.

### *David and Uriah*

The encounter between David and Bathsheba functions as the introduction to the main action of the story: David's unsuccessful attempts to conceal the adultery and subsequent murder of Uriah. David sends a message to Joab ordering Uriah home from the battlefield, ostensibly to ask how the siege is progressing. His ulterior motive seems to be that while back in Jerusalem Uriah will have sex with his wife and as a result the child Bathsheba is carrying will be seen as Uriah's instead of David's (2 Sam 11:6-8), though the text never actually declares that this is David's intention. Not only is David willing to give up paternity of the child, he actively and anxiously attempts to pass off the child as Uriah's. This seems a rather odd action for any father but especially for a king for whom progeny would be a matter of national interest.<sup>606</sup> Arguably the main insecurity surrounding female sexuality in a patriarchal society would have been for a man to raise and give inheritance to children that were not his. 2 Samuel 11 depicts the monarch threatening the very fabric of the "house of the father" (*bêt 'āb*)—not only has David had sexual access to another man's wife, he tries to trick the cuckolded husband into claiming legitimate paternity for the child. Significantly, however, David is unsuccessful in his attempts to defraud Uriah's lineage though he deprives him of his life.<sup>607</sup> The narrative highlights the social insecurity around false paternity but does not allow it to occur.

---

<sup>606</sup> As the lists of David's sons born at Hebron (2 Sam 3:1-5) and at Jerusalem (1 Sam 5:13-16) would indicate.

<sup>607</sup> Though the narrative does not state that Uriah was childless, it does not mention that he had any children, so it would seem he died without lineage.

During Uriah's first audience with the king, David tells him to "go to his house and wash his feet" (*rēd lēbētēkā ūrēḥaṣ raglēkā*), usually understood as a euphemism for sexual intercourse (2 Sam 11:8).<sup>608</sup> Uriah leaves his audience with David, and David sends a gift after him to his house.<sup>609</sup> However, Uriah chooses to sleep at the door of the king's house with the king's servants instead of going to his own house (2 Sam 11:9). The next day, David is informed about where Uriah spends the night and he questions Uriah as to why he did not go to his house (2 Sam 11:10). This inquiry about Uriah's nocturnal behavior makes David's objective appear rather obvious, at least for the reader.<sup>610</sup> Uriah responds to David (2 Sam 11:11),

"The Ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in Succoth,<sup>611</sup> and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open field, yet *I* should go to my house to eat, drink, and lie with my wife?! By your very life, I will not do this thing!"

*hā'ārōn wēyisrā'el wiyhūdā yōšēbīm bassukkôt wa'dōnī yô'āb wē'abdē  
'ādōnī 'al-pēnē haśśādeh ḥōnīm wa'ānī 'ābō' 'el-bēti le'ēkol wēlištôt  
wēliškab 'im-'išṭī ḥayyekā wēḥē napšekā 'im-'e'ēseh 'et-haddābār hazzeh*

Uriah's fastidious sanctimony about cultic purity presents a stark contrast to David's blatant disregard for social morality in his sexual violation of Uriah's wife. As a matter of cultic purity as well as solidarity with his fellow soldiers, Uriah refuses to go to his

<sup>608</sup> In Hebrew, the word "feet" (*raglayīm*) can be used as a euphemism for genitals. Cf. other possibilities: Exod 4:25; Judg 3:24; 1 Sam 24:4; Isa 6:2, 7:20.

<sup>609</sup> The term *maš'at hammelek* is usually understood as a gift of food in light of Genesis 43:34, the banquet Joseph gives for his brothers. See Karl Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel erklärt* (Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 8; Tübingen and Leipzig: Mohr, 1902), 251; Ackroyd, *II Samuel*, 102. However, Bailey (*David in Love and War*, 98) argues that it should be understood as a person giving the signal to David that Uriah is having sex with his wife and therefore has violated the codes of war and can be executed.

<sup>610</sup> For speculation about whether Uriah knew about David's adultery with his wife see especially Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 186-229.

<sup>611</sup> The word *sukkôt* here has also been understood as "booths," i.e. military tents. However, McCarter (*II Samuel*, 287), following Yigael Yadin ("Some Aspects of the Strategy of Ahab and David," *Bib* 36 [1955]: 332-351), argues for a geographical location rather than tents.



house to eat, drink or have sex with his wife while he is in Jerusalem,<sup>612</sup> apparently referring to the custom of soldiers abstaining from sexual intercourse before battle.<sup>613</sup> The war with the Ammonites, in which Uriah is engaged, is a personal feud over masculine honor. In 2 Samuel 10, the Ammonite king Hanun publicly humiliates David's envoys by cutting off half of their beards, a symbol of masculinity, and cutting off half their garments at the buttocks, thereby exposing their genitals (2 Sam 10:4).<sup>614</sup> This symbolic emasculation of David's envoys is meant as an attack on David's honor by challenging his manhood. Ironically, Uriah has been fighting to defend David's masculinity while at home David has disgraced Uriah by having sex with his wife.

Uriah also presents a contrast to David's right-hand man, his general Joab. He particularly mentions Joab in his exclamation of solidarity with the men on the battlefield. Joab, however, will betray Uriah along with other Israelite soldiers, by positioning them in a location where they will be more likely to be killed. Joab then utilizes the information of Uriah's death to mollify the king's anger over a tactical battle error. Joab does not demonstrate solidarity with his soldiers but instead is represented as a conduit of the king's power. He follows David's orders and ensures that Uriah is killed in battle. Moreover, his report to David about his error of coming to close to the wall shows that Joab knows how to manipulate the king but also exemplifies the relative power positions between king and military commander.

---

<sup>612</sup> However, in 2 Samuel 11:13 he is willing to eat and drink at a feast given by David.

<sup>613</sup> Cf. 1 Samuel 21:5; also Joshua 7:6-26. See Ackroyd, *II Samuel*, 102; Bailey, *David in Love and War*, 96; Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 311. Van Seters, *Saga of King David*, 298, remarks that Uriah is treating a raid for booty like a holy war.

<sup>614</sup> See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 270-271. I discuss 2 Samuel 10 in more detail in section 6.2.

David tells Uriah that he will send him back to the battlefield the next day (2 Sam 11:12), but in the meantime David tries yet another measure to get Uriah to go to his house.<sup>615</sup> David invites Uriah to dine with him and attempts to get him drunk (*wayěšakkěrhû*). The use of the Piel stem with the verb  $\sqrt{\text{škr}}$  “be or become drunk” has a factitive or even causative sense here, showing David’s intentionality. David apparently expects that the influence of alcohol will prompt Uriah to forget his convictions temporarily so that he will go to his house. That way, whether or not Uriah has sex with Bathsheba, he will be too drunk to remember and will have to assume that the child is his. However, even drunk, Uriah sleeps again “on his bed among the servants of his lord” (*běmiškābô ‘im-‘abdē ‘ădōnāyw*) and does not go to his house (2 Sam 11:13).<sup>616</sup> David’s two attempts to manipulate Uriah have all failed, so his next move is to arrange for Uriah’s elimination.

The next morning David sends Uriah back to the battlefield carrying a letter to Joab which is effectually his own death warrant (2 Sam 11:14). Since Uriah has refused to comply with David’s cover-up scheme, David sends written instructions to Joab that Uriah should be placed in the front line and during the heat of the battle everyone around him should fall back (2 Sam 11:15). Uriah does die in battle, though not exactly according to David’s instructions. Joab assigns Uriah to a place where he had observed that the Ammonites had strong fighters, and Uriah dies fighting them along with other soldiers of David (2 Sam 11:16-17). Joab’s strategy exhibits more subtlety and finesse than the plan David originally proposed, though it costs more lives. Joab then sends a

---

<sup>615</sup> It is difficult to tell if David keeps his promise or not. See McCarter (*II Samuel*, 287) that David does keep his word if his discussion with Uriah in 2 Samuel 11:10-13 takes place in the evening.

<sup>616</sup> Ackroyd (*II Samuel*, 102) remarks that “Uriah drunk is more pious than David sober!”

messenger to David to report on the progress of the siege and to inform him about Uriah's death, which he utilizes as a means of assuaging David's anger about a tactical error in battle (2 Sam 11:18-25).<sup>617</sup> While David does not personally kill Uriah, he gives orders that he should die in battle, a tactic that would not arouse suspicion of guilt on David's part. Strikingly, it is Joab, who kills both Abner and Absalom, who carries out the violence on Uriah.<sup>618</sup> However, in this narrative, the blame for Uriah's death is laid squarely on David's shoulders because David abuses his power as king to ensure that Uriah dies in battle.

In 2 Samuel 11, David exercises his power as king to satisfy his lust for Bathsheba, sexually violating the woman and infringing upon the sexual rights of her husband. In 2 Samuel 11:6-13 David tries to use his political power to manipulate Uriah's sexual actions. The king wants to control the sexual behavior of his soldier in order to cover up his own sexual crime.<sup>619</sup> Despite his best efforts, David is ultimately

---

<sup>617</sup> Joab instructs his messenger that if David becomes angry at Joab for going too close to the city wall and reminds him about the death of Abimelech due to a woman dropping a mill stone on his head while he besieged Thebez (Judg 9:50-55), then the messenger should mention that Uriah is dead (2 Sam 11:19-21). However, contrary to Joab's instructions, the messenger includes the information about Uriah's death at the end of the initial report without waiting to see if David would become angry (2 Sam 11:22-24). David responds to the messenger that he should tell Joab not to worry about going too close to the wall, giving the rather callous statement "sometimes the sword consumes one way, sometimes another" (*kî-kāzoh wēkāzeh tokal hehāreb*), and ordering Joab to strengthen his assault against the city (2 Sam 11:25). I follow the MT here, but I think McCarter's argument that the MT is defective is very plausible. For his reconstruction of the text using the MT and the Septuagint, see *II Samuel*, 282-284.

<sup>618</sup> In fact, it would have been possible to spin this tale to make David appear innocent of any wrongdoing. See Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 93, who discusses each of the deaths David for which David could have been blamed and who notes the "subtlety and professionalism" this narrative attributes to David.

<sup>619</sup> David's use of extreme measures to avoid having his sexual misconduct become known suggests that the sexual misdeeds of the king had important socio-political ramifications. David commits grave social injustices in 2 Samuel 11, but these abuses of power stem from his initial sexual offense. Literarily, one source of comparison to David's abuse of power is the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic. At the beginning of the epic, Gilgamesh is portrayed as an abusive king, and, though obscure, some part of his abuse of the people of Uruk is expressed sexually. In the OB version, at least, it appears that, as king of Uruk, Gilgamesh has sexual rights to a bride on her wedding night (iv, ll. 10-15). Yet, Gilgamesh is not presented as committing a crime. There is no hiding of Gilgamesh's excessive sexual energy—the expression of

unable to compel Uriah to have sex with Bathsheba. However, the king's total control over the bodies of his subjects is demonstrated by his order for Uriah's death. Whether or not he intentionally defied the king's wishes, Uriah pays for his "disobedience" to royal "persuasion" with his life.

2 Samuel 11:26 notes that "when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah, her husband, was dead she mourned for her husband" (*wattišma 'ēšet 'ûrîyâ kî-mēt 'ûrîyâ 'îšāh wattispod 'al-ba 'ēlāh*). Bathsheba identity as Uriah's wife is repeated three times, emphasizing her connection to her first husband just before she is about to become the wife of David. Bathsheba's mourning gives her an active role not related to David, though the following verse suggests that this could be a ritual period necessary to precede David taking her into his household. After Bathsheba mourns for her husband, David sends word and brings her to live with him (literally "he gathered her to his house" *wayya'aspāh 'el-bêtô*), where she becomes David's wife and gives birth to a son (2 Sam 11:27a).

#### *David and Nathan*

Just when David seems to have gotten away with adulterous rape and murder by proxy, the narrator states (2 Sam 11:27b), "the thing that David had done was bad in the eyes of Yahweh" (*wayyēra 'haddābār 'āšer- 'āsāh dāwid bě 'ênē YHWH*), and Yahweh

---

power is blatant, public, and even cast as a legitimate ritual. In contrast, David's behavior is intended to remain secret, as pointed out in Nathan's oracle against David (2 Sam 12:12). Throughout the story, the public is not present but the threat of discovery overshadows the main plot. Within 2 Samuel 11, David is willing to resort to murder in order to avoid public knowledge of his sexual misconduct.

By discussing the Gilgamesh Epic, I merely intend to discuss another ancient Near Eastern narrative that I find helpful in illuminating 2 Samuel 11-12 and do not at all wish to suggest any literary dependence between these texts. For texts and edition, see Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Other easily accessible translations include: Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Benjamin L. Foster, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation, Analogues, Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2001).

sends the prophet Nathan to condemn David's actions (2 Sam 12:1). This is quite an abrupt change from the theme of Yahweh being "with" David up to this point in the David narrative.<sup>620</sup> So far, the events of 2 Samuel 11 seem to have taken place in relative secrecy, notwithstanding the utilization of messengers throughout. Nathan's audience has a more official character to it, but there is no indication of a public presence in 2 Samuel 12:1-15.<sup>621</sup> However, Nathan's oracle will focus on the very public consequences of David's secret misdeeds.

Nathan comes before the king on the pretense of presenting a legal case for judgment,<sup>622</sup> but instead issues a parable<sup>623</sup> that will be used to indict David. Nathan tells a story about two men, one rich, having many sheep and cattle, and one poor, who had only one beloved ewe lamb (2 Sam 12:1-3). The poor man treats his ewe lamb as a prized family pet who "ate from his bread and drank from his cup and lay down in his embrace" (*mippittô to 'kal ûmikkôsô tišteḥ ûbêḥêqô tiškāb*), so that it was "like a daughter to him" (*wattêḥî-lô kēbat*). However, when the rich man has unexpected guests, instead of slaughtering one of his many sheep, he steals and slaughters the ewe lamb belonging to the poor man (2 Sam 12:4).

In Nathan's parable, the rich man represents David, the poor man Uriah, and the ewe-lamb Bathsheba. The woman's counterpart in Nathan's allegorical anecdote is an

---

<sup>620</sup> 1 Samuel 16:18, 18:14, 18:28-19:1a; 2 Samuel 5:10. See discussion in McCarter, "Apology of David," 503-504; idem, *II Samuel*, 290-291.

<sup>621</sup> See discussion of royal audiences in section 3.4.2.

<sup>622</sup> Preserved in LXX<sup>L</sup> but not MT; explained as a haplography by McCarter, *II Samuel*, 294.

<sup>623</sup> For genre, see Gunn's discussion of the "judgment-eliciting parable," *The Story of King David*, 40-43, and also McCarter, *II Samuel*, 304-305. A similar scenario also occurs with the ruse of the wise woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14, also immediately after a story of sexual violation and murder.

animal whereas the two men are represented by human men. This indicates that the key players in the situation are David and Uriah; Bathsheba is secondary. The comparison is that David is rich in women, the rich man's many flocks, representing his numerous consorts,<sup>624</sup> whereas Uriah only has one wife. The rich man eats the ewe-lamb and, symbolically, David sates his sexual appetite with Bathsheba.<sup>625</sup> Precious though the ewe-lamb is to the poor man, the parable presents women as possessions that can be bought and sold, or in this case, stolen. Though women were not "owned," by men in ancient Israel,<sup>626</sup> women's sexuality often functions in biblical narratives in terms of relations between men.<sup>627</sup> As cultural exchange items, women and domestic animals buttress male-male social relations, so infractions to this system create anxiety and violence since they threaten the social fabric of patriarchal societies.<sup>628</sup> The parable does not match the crimes exactly in that the rich man does not kill the poor man to cover up the fact that he stole the poor man's sheep, but it hits at the heart of David's wrongdoing: David and the rich man in the parable both abuse their power and exploit someone of lower social status.

---

<sup>624</sup> 2 Samuel 3:2-5 lists six women by name as mothers of David's sons born in Hebron: Ahinoam, Abigail, Ma'acah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah. We also know of Michal (1 Sam 18:20-29; 2 Sam 3:13-16) and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:26-27). 2 Samuel 5:13-15 says that David took more *pīlagšīm* and wives in Jerusalem, but does not provide a number. From 2 Samuel 16:20-22, David has at least ten *pīlagšīm*.

<sup>625</sup> See Stone, who discusses connections between food, sex, and women in the Bible (*Practicing Safer Texts*, 68-89).

<sup>626</sup> See Westbrook and Wells, *Everyday Law*, 60.

<sup>627</sup> Cf. Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*.

<sup>628</sup> See Gayle Rubin, "Traffic in Women," 174, and Regina Schwartz, "Adultery in the House of David," 137.

David is outraged at the rich man's action, calling him a "monster" (*ben-māwet*)<sup>629</sup> and, thinking that this is a legitimate legal case, judges that the rich man must compensate the lamb sevenfold (2 Sam 12:5-6).<sup>630</sup> Nathan tells David "You are the man!" (*'attā hā'îš*, 2 Sam 12:7), announcing that David is the actual guilty party and represents the rich man in the story. Nathan then delivers Yahweh's message to David (2 Sam 12:7b-9):

It was I who anointed you king over Israel and it was I who rescued you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house your master's women in your lap; and I gave you the House of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little I would have given you much more! Why then did you despise Yahweh by doing evil in his sight? Uriah the Hittite you killed by the sword and his wife you took for yourself—you murdered him by the sword of the Ammonites!

*'ānōkî mēšahtîkā lēmelek 'al-yiśrā'el wē'ānōkî hiššaltîkā miyyad šā'ûl  
wā'etnā lēkā 'et-bêt 'ādōnēkā wē'et-nēšē 'ādōnēkā bēḥēqekā wā'etnā lēkā  
'et-bêt yiśrā'el wiyhūdā wē'im-mē'at wē'osipā lēkā kāhēnnā wēkāhēnnā  
maddûa 'bāziytā 'et-YHWH<sup>631</sup> la'āsôt hāra' bē'énaw 'ēt'ûrîyā haḥittî  
hikkîta baḥereb wē'et-'îštô lāqaḥtā lēkā lē'îššā wē'otô hāragtā bēḥereb  
bēnē 'ammôn*

The indictment begins with a brief summation of Yahweh's support of David until this point. The specific examples focus on political power and, notably, control over women's sexuality. Yahweh kept David safe the various times Saul attempted to kill him

<sup>629</sup> The phrase "son of death" has been understood as David calling for the death penalty and property restitution (see Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 313). Thus, the pronouncement of Nathan to David, "You are the man!" is a death sentence. However, McCarter (*II Samuel*, 299) explains that David is not calling for the man's execution, which would not make sense with the property compensation, but rather using a derogatory term similar to "son of Belial" found elsewhere in Samuel. McCarter translates the phrase as "fiend of hell" but says it has the force of "scoundrel" or "damnable fellow." Cf. Ackroyd, *II Samuel*, 109, who agrees that it is not a death sentence but an indignant exclamation.

<sup>630</sup> Following LXX. The MT reads "fourfold," probably adjusted in accordance with the punishment for stealing sheep prescribed in Exod 21:37 and/or possibly for the deaths of four of David's sons (unnamed son of Bathsheba, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah). Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 294.

<sup>631</sup> I understand the MT's "word of Yahweh" as euphemistic; the original text had "Yahweh" next to the verb *√bzḥ* "disdain, hold in contempt" and scribes added "word of" (*'et-dēbar*) out of respect for the divine name. See the detailed discussion in McCarter, *II Samuel*, 295-296.

or have him killed, and though there is no mention of this elsewhere, the narrative seems to assume that David has taken possession of Saul's women. After supporting David over and against Saul, Yahweh gave kingship over Israel and Judah to David. However, David has committed a grave wrong before Yahweh and so now stands in divine judgment. Yahweh indicts David for his dual crimes of having Uriah killed and taking Uriah's wife for himself. It does not seem that David is incriminated so much for the initial adultery with Bathsheba<sup>632</sup> as much as his extreme measures to hide the adultery, namely, arranging for Uriah to be killed in battle and especially marrying his wife after his death. David's real crime is his abuse of power as monarch—he uses his power as king in order to fulfill his sexual desire and to avoid taking responsibility for the consequences of this sexual misdeed.

Nathan's oracle makes specific reference to Saul, putting this story into the context of a larger Saul-David narrative, a sign of the relative lateness of the oracle. This sets up David in direct comparison with the former royal founder; however, this episode is not an excuse to depose David and his line. David is allowed to repent and accept punishment, but Saul never had such an opportunity. However, David's offense is not cultic—he never worships the wrong gods or worships the wrong way, which stands in contrast to Saul and many of the evaluations of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Compared to the evil deeds attributed to other kings of Israel and Judah, David's sin stands out as specifically sexual. The kings of Israel and Judah who are viewed negatively within the Deuteronomistic history typically earn this designation for cultic violations. Although the DtrH critique of Solomon does have to do with his wives since

---

<sup>632</sup> So Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 314, who notes how the murder of Uriah and taking Bathsheba as a wife are mentioned twice.



many of them are foreign (1 Kgs 11:1-2), the problem is not primarily sexual but cultic in that his diplomatic marriages result in the introduction of foreign deities in the Jerusalem cult (1 Kgs 11:3-13). David's sin has nothing to do with cultic abuses or the worship of other deities besides Yahweh. Rather, the cause of David's troubles later in his reign stems from the socio-political realm and is chiefly sexual in nature. The narrative depicts David as guilty of abusing his monarchical power but only to achieve his sexual desires. From this comparison, it seems that, for DtrH, a sexual offense is in some sense a "safe crime" that does not result in delegitimizing David as king. While there is a theological component to David's misdeeds in that Yahweh is displeased and exacts punishment, Yahweh never rejects David as his choice for king. Thus, according to the narrative, David's dynasty remains the legitimate ruling house despite political challenges.

After charging David with his crimes, Nathan delivers Yahweh's two curses against David (12:10-12):

Now the sword will never depart from your house—because you have despised me and you have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife....I will raise calamity upon you from your own house; I will take your wives before your eyes and I will give them to your compatriot and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. You acted in secret, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.

*wě'attā lō'-tāsûr hereb mibbêtēkā 'ad-'ôlām 'ēqeb kî bēzītānî watiqqah  
'et-'ēšet 'ûrîyāh hahittî lihyôt lēkā lē'iššā...hīnēnî mēqîm 'ālēkā rā'ā  
mibbêtekā wēlāqahî 'et-nāšēkā lē'ēnēkā wēnātattî lērē'ēkā<sup>633</sup> wēšākab  
'im-nāšēkā lē'ēnē haššemeš hazzō't kî 'attā 'āsītā bassāter wa'ānî 'e'ēšeh  
'et-haddābār hazzeh neged kol-yiśrā'ēl wēneged haššāmeš*

In Nathan's curse the punishment fits the crime. David is guilty of adultery and murder; thus, his house will be visited by sexual crimes and violence. Though the curse is

---

<sup>633</sup> Reading the singular with LXX, Syr., Vulg. The MT has plural but the verb is 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular.

supposed to be against David, the punishment is acted out upon the bodies of David's women. David's initial wrong is the sexual violation of Bathsheba, but in recompense for his transgressions, the author presents Yahweh as ensuring that more women will become victims of sexual violence.<sup>634</sup>

Nathan's promise of a lasting Davidic dynasty in 2 Samuel 7 is still valid but will henceforth be filled with violence in fulfillment of this curse. This not only foreshadows the violence among David's children—Amnon's rape of Tamar, Absalom's fratricide of Amnon, Absalom's revolt as well as his sexual violation of David's consorts, and Solomon's execution of Adonijah—but could also be understood as extending to the secession of the Northern tribes and possibly the violence associated with Jehu and Athaliah.

#### *Immediate Aftermath*

David admits his guilt, and Nathan tells him that he will not die for his sin but that his son by Bathsheba will die (2 Sam 12:13-14). Nathan leaves and Yahweh strikes the child that "Uriah's wife" (*'ēšet- 'ūrîyâ*) bore to David with illness (2 Sam 12:15). David attempts to make intercession for the child, fasting and lying upon the ground all night and refusing to get up or eat, but after a week the child dies nevertheless (2 Sam 12:16-17). After the death of their first child, David and Bathsheba have another son, the future king Solomon (2 Sam 12:24a). Here Bathsheba is named once again, this time explicitly as David's wife. The meaning of Solomon's name (*šēlōmōh*, "his replacement") most

---

<sup>634</sup> A similar situation can also be found in Judges 19-21, where the retribution for the horrific gang rape and murder of a Levite's concubine involves the near decimation of the tribe of Benjamin and mass rape of the young women of Jabesh-Gilead and at the festival of Shiloh.

likely refers to his “replacing” his infant brother who died.<sup>635</sup> 2 Samuel 12:24b adds that “Yahweh loved him” (*wēYHWH ’āhēbô*) and, through Nathan, gives the child another name: *yēdīdāh* “beloved of Yahweh” (12:25).<sup>636</sup> While the episode in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 certainly has narrative integrity without Solomon’s birth notice, the mention of the future king represents the secure future that the audience knows will come for David after a period of turbulence. The narrative of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 is about David’s sexual transgression and the resulting divine curse; however, the note about Solomon’s birth connects 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 to the events surrounding Solomon’s succession in 1 Kings 1-2, in which both Bathsheba and Nathan, who do not appear in 2 Samuel 13-24, reemerge as important figures. The appended birth notice in 2 Samuel 12:24-25 is a reminder that this story of sexual violation, murder, and divine punishment also happens to be Solomon’s beginning.<sup>637</sup>

David’s sexual transgression in 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 directly relates to his role as monarch. Because he is king, David has the power to bid Bathsheba to the palace, summon Uriah home to Jerusalem to attempt to conceal the illegitimate pregnancy, and when this fails, David is also able to order Uriah’s death. He abuses his monarchical power by satisfying his sexual desire at the expense of his subordinate and concealing his offense through orders given to his military commander. The story of David’s (coercive)

---

<sup>635</sup> Cf. Stamm, “Der Name des Königs Salomo,” 285-297, esp. 288-289; Gerleman, “Die Wurzel *šlm*,” 1-14, esp. 13; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 303. Other interpretations view Solomon as Uriah’s replacement (Veijola, “Salomo,” Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 403). 1 Chronicles 22:19 gives the etymology of Solomon’s name as meaning “peace” (cf. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 317; Ackroyd, *II Samuel*, 114, though he also mentions “replacement” etymology).

<sup>636</sup> Not an exact parallel (*√’hb* versus *√ydd*). It is possible that Yedidyah was Solomon’s throne name, though elsewhere in Samuel and Kings he is referred to as *šēlomô*. Cf. Ackroyd, *II Samuel*, 115; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 303-304.

<sup>637</sup> See McCarter’s discussion of interpreting the birth notice in light of the rest of 2 Samuel 11-12 and whether it presents a favorable view of Solomon, *II Samuel*, 307-309.

adultery with Bathsheba certainly admits serious misdeeds on the part of the king; however, it also demonstrates without question Solomon's paternity, which must have been part of the impetus for the composition of the tale and its inclusion in the David Narrative.

David is also presented as in the wrong in the account of his taking a census in 2 Samuel 24. This passage is similar to 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 in that David's is punished by Yahweh but his offense is not cultic. Again, David admits his wrongdoing and accepts punishment, and, after a certain point, Yahweh relents. Though the examples of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 and 24 admit that David committed transgressions, he is redeemed by his penitence. In contrast, Saul tries to defend himself and offers excuses when Samuel makes his cultic infractions known (1 Sam 13; 15). Though the story is certainly critical of David, it never delegitimizes him as king.

Without the Nathan pericope, the implications of the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah are decidedly more limited. Though David's actions themselves remain negative, the consequences are not nearly as far-reaching. Moreover, the narrative is lively and entertaining, perhaps even bawdy, presenting a satirical view that is critical but not overtly judgmental, though David is still punished for his actions by the loss of his infant son. Even with the addition of the Nathan section, David immediately admits his guilt and accepts his punishment. Despite David's appalling offenses, the narrative still causes the reader to sympathize with him to some degree, feeling his panic at being caught, and sympathizing with his distress over his young son's illness. Though David's actions are reprehensible, the reader is not as horrified or repulsed as, for example, with Amnon's rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22.

### ***6.5. Under Yahweh's Curse***

So far, I have focused on 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, 13:1-22, and 16:20-23 independently from one another. However, these episodes are connected literarily through Nathan's oracle against David in 2 Samuel 12 as well as the placement of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 before the narrative of Absalom's revolt. In this section, I will discuss the interconnections of these episodes, which further highlight the significance of sexuality in this very political narrative.

Although David is already punished within the narrative of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 by the death of his first son by Bathsheba, the curse of David in 2 Samuel 12:11-12 and its connection with later events of David's reign and Solomon's succession ensures that the episode of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah will continue to have reverberations throughout the rest of the David narrative. This narrative about sexual violation and monarchical abuse comes to drive the interpretation of Absalom's revolt and Solomon's succession to the throne, thereby emphasizing the sexual aspects of those narratives.

David's curse as described in 2 Samuel 12:7-15 and borne out by the events in the larger narrative of 2 Samuel 13-19 and 1 Kings 1-2 connects sexuality and kingship: his daughter and ten of his concubines are sexually violated by one of his sons (2 Sam 13:1-22; 2 Sam 16:20-23); three of his sons die as a result of sexual offenses, (2 Sam 12:13-22; 2 Sam 13:23-37; 1 Kgs 2:13-25); and his kingship is seriously threatened by Absalom's revolt as well as Sheba's attempted secession. It is significant that a sexual act sets off the sequence of events which nearly costs David his throne. Through divine punishment, David's sexual offense and act of violence against Uriah's household is revisited on his own royal house, and by extension affects the entire kingdom.

Placed immediately before the account of Absalom's revolt, Yahweh's curse of David foreshadows the violence, both sexual and otherwise, that will be a part of the revolt and the succession of the throne. Like their father, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah commit sexual violations, and these three sons of David all come to a violent end, failing to succeed the throne.

*2 Samuel 13:1-22*

The first reverberation of the sexual violation and murder of 2 Samuel 11-12 is the story of the Amnon's rape of Tamar and Absalom's vengeful fratricide in 2 Samuel 13. Under David's curse, his secret crime against Uriah's household is replayed first within his own royal house and then on a national scale. Part of David's curse is strife within his own house, and Amnon's rape of Tamar and Absalom's vengeful murder of Amnon breach familial relations. Analogous to David's violation of Bathsheba, a woman whom rightfully he should have protected, Amnon rapes his half-sister whose sexual honor he should have defended.<sup>638</sup> Also like his father David, Amnon acts in a voyeuristic manner (2 Sam 13:8-10), and as in 2 Samuel 11, the reader too becomes a voyeur of the objectified woman.<sup>639</sup> Just as the turmoil during David's reign and succession is blamed on his crime of sexual violation and murder in 2 Samuel 11, the origin of Absalom's revolt is attributed to a sexual crime that results in murder.

---

<sup>638</sup> Cf. Genesis 34, where all of Dinah's brothers are outraged over her rape. Though it is Simeon and Levi who slaughter the Shechemites, the rest of the brothers take part in ravaging the city. Also, see Stone's anthropological reading of the narrative, where he argues, based on examples from honor-shame societies, that it was particularly the brother's role to guard the sexual purity of his sister (*Sex, Honor and Power*, 118).

<sup>639</sup> When describing this section of the narrative, Tribble declares, "voyeurism prevails" (*Texts of Terror*, 43). See especially Exum who discusses voyeurism within a narrative and by the reader in her analysis of 2 Samuel 11-12 and Judges 19 (*Fragmented Women*, 170-201, esp. 170-175).

Appropriately deemed a “text of terror,” by Phyllis Trible,<sup>640</sup> Tamar is the first of several women to suffer sexual violation as retribution for David’s sexual offense in 2 Samuel 11.<sup>641</sup> The next women to endure this cycle of sexual violence are ten of David’s *pīlagšīm*, who do not receive the same narrative subjectivity and sympathy given to Tamar.

#### *2 Samuel 16:20-23*

Though the calamity that will arise from David’s own house (2 Sam 12:11) arguably begins with the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13,<sup>642</sup> Nathan’s curse upon David in 2 Samuel 12:10-12 connects most fully with Absalom’s rape of David’s concubines in 2 Sam 16:20-22. This episode exhibits several literary similarities to 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25. Absalom has sex with David’s concubines on the roof (*gag*) of the palace “in the sight of all Israel” (*lē’ênê kol-yiśrā’ēl*), and these details connect to the importance of the palace roof (*gag*) in 2 Samuel 11:2 and to Yahweh’s promise in 2 Samuel 12:11-12 that he will take David’s wives and give them to another who will have sex with them “in the sight of this very sun” (*lē’ênê haššemeš hazzō’t*) and “before all Israel” (*neged kol-yiśrā’ēl*). Nathan’s curse highlights Absalom’s takeover of David’s concubines and gives the episode in 2 Samuel 16:20-23 particular significance. Furthermore, Absalom’s revolt is

---

<sup>640</sup> Trible includes a chapter on Tamar in her *Texts of Terror*.

<sup>641</sup> In Nathan’s parable to David he says that the ewe-lamb, symbolic of Bathsheba, is “like a daughter” to the poor man (2 Sam 12:3). While there is probably word play between the Hebrew word *bat* “daughter” and the first element of Bathsheba’s name (Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 79; Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 123, since the episode immediately following David’s sexual violation of Bathsheba is the rape of his daughter Tamar, the comparison of the lamb to a daughter could indicate a connection between these narratives (cf. Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise*, 159-160; Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts*, 94. Furthermore, though 2 Samuel 12:11b (*wēlāqaḥtī ’et-nāšēkā lē’ēynēkā wēnātattī lērē’ekā*) is usually translated “I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your friends,” the Hebrew word for “wife” is the same as the word for “woman,” and Tamar is also a woman who belongs to David.

<sup>642</sup> Cf. Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts*, 94.

certainly “malevolent” (*rā‘ā*) for David, since it is the single biggest threat to David’s reign. Though David’s own son, Absalom is the “other man” who “takes” David’s women, his ten consorts, and “lies” with them.<sup>643</sup> While David is not present for this to happen literally “before his eyes,” Absalom’s actions are specifically directed towards David since the objective is for Absalom to “become odious” to David. However, 2 Samuel 16:22 narrates how Absalom lies with David’s concubines, “before the eyes of” Israel. Yahweh’s curse is to take place before “all Israel,” contrasting with David’s extreme measures to keep his liaison with Bathsheba a secret, and, as discussed above, the term “all Israel” is emphasized in 2 Samuel 16:21-22. 2 Samuel 16:20-22 does not mention the sun, which is stated twice in Nathan’s curse. The sun appropriately symbolizes justice because it provides light and thus exposes evil.<sup>644</sup> However, an action taking place “before the sun” could also have the sense of occurring publicly, in “broad daylight,” and Absalom’s sexual taking of David’s concubines is intended to be highly publicized.

Though only two verses, 2 Samuel 16:21-22 demonstrates a significant connection to the account of David’s sexual crime and punishment in 2 Sam 11:2-12:25. Yahweh multiplies David’s sexual violation of one woman and the murder of her husband into the sexual coercion of ten women amidst a civil war. When read in light of Nathan’s curse on David in 2 Sam 12:10-12, Absalom’s sexual takeover of David’s consorts appears to be the culmination of David’s punishment. Ultimately, Absalom’s

---

<sup>643</sup> 2 Samuel 12:10-12 uses *škb* euphemistically for sexual intercourse, whereas 2 Samuel 16:20-22 has *bw’*.

<sup>644</sup> Cf. the Mesopotamian deity Šamaš, who is both sun god and god of justice. For examples of Šamaš as illuminator, see the Great Hymn to Šamaš (ll. 1-11) and the prologue to the Laws of Hammurabi (ll. 27-49).



revolt is defeated and he is killed, and because of the curse against David, his sexual takeover of David's women can be understood as part of the reason for Absalom's demise. In a certain sense, then, Absalom is both villain and victim as Yahweh's curse runs its course through the house of David.

Tod Linafelt has pointed out that David is deliberately presented as "taking" ( $\sqrt{lqh}$ ) women in marriage during his ascent to power as king and later abusing the power of kingship in his sexual "taking" ( $\sqrt{lqh}$ ) of Bathsheba.<sup>645</sup> In recompense for this illicit "taking," Yahweh promises to "take" ( $\sqrt{lqh}$ ) the women of David's household and give them to another man (2 Sam 12:11), which is fulfilled in Amnon's rape of Tamar and Absalom's sexual takeover of David's consorts. The idea of a deity giving a man's wives to another man as divine retribution has parallels in biblical, Old Aramaic, and Mesopotamian texts. In Jeremiah 8:10 Yahweh declares to the rebellious people of Jerusalem that he "will give your wives to others and your fields to dispossessors" (*'ettēn 'et-něšēhem la'āhērīm šēdôtēhem lēyôrēšīm*). The ritual curse section of the Old Aramaic Sefire Treaty includes the stripping of a harlot to represent that if the vassal Mati'el breaks the treaty, his wives and the wives of his sons and his nobles will also be stripped naked: "[And just as the prostitute is stripped, so] will the wives of Mat'iel, the wives of his offspring, and the wives of his nobles be stripped" ([w'yk zy t'rr znyt' kn] *y'rrn nšy mt' 'l wnšy 'qrh wnšy r[bwh]*).<sup>646</sup> In the succession treaty of Esarhaddon, a

---

<sup>645</sup> Tod Linafelt, "Taking Women in Samuel." However, sometimes  $\sqrt{lqh}$  is simply a term for marriage, as in 1 Samuel 25:39, when David proposes marriage to Abigail, which she happily accepts. Though Linafelt does not mention that the Hebrew term "take" ( $\sqrt{lqh}$ ) is often a generic term for sexual union, within or outside of marriage, as Akkadian *aḫāzu* ("take, seize," but also "marry"), these terms themselves would also benefit from critical discussion.

<sup>646</sup> Sefire IA, 41. For the text edition, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rev. ed; Rome: Editrice Pontifico, 1995), 46-47; see also Heath Dewrell, "Human Beings as Ritual Objects: A Reexamination of Sefire IA 35b-42," *Maarav* 17 (2009): 35.

curse for anyone who breaks the treaty reads, “May Venus, the brightest of the stars, before your eyes make your wives lie in the lap of your enemy” (*<sup>D</sup>Ištar nabaṭ kakkabī ina niṭil ēnīkunu ḥirātekunu ina sūn <sup>LÚ</sup>nakrikunu lišanil*).<sup>647</sup> In each of these examples, as in the curse against David in 2 Samuel 12:11, divine punishment visited upon seditious men is enacted upon the women who belong to them. The women are “taken,” “given,” and “made to lie,” by the deity, indicating coerced sex. Moreover, in Jeremiah 8:10 and in Esarhaddon’s succession treaty the men’s property and possessions are seized by foreign enemies just as their wives are taken sexually by other men. Likewise, in 2 Samuel 12:11, an “evil” (*rā’ā*) is promised to rise from David’s own house, his royal dynasty, which comes in the form of a revolt. From these examples, it appears that divine sanction was envisioned for the male power politics involving the sexual “taking” of women. It should hardly be surprising, then, that the story of David’s attaining and maintaining hegemony over Israel reveals a seemingly intrinsic connection between sexuality and political competition among men, which includes the sexual use and abuse of women.

#### **6.6. David and Abishag: 1 Kings 1:1-4**

By way of conclusion, I will discuss a text that is essentially the inverse to the three episodes in which sexual relations occur: the statement that sexual intercourse does not occur between the aged king David and the young, beautiful Abishag (1 Kgs 1:4). I have already referenced this episode in sections 3.4.2 and 5.4 because of its literary relationship to Bathsheba’s appeal to David about naming Solomon his successor and Adonijah’s marriage request for Abishag; thus my discussion here will be brief.

---

<sup>647</sup> For text and transliteration, see Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, 46; lines 428-429.

At the beginning of the book of Kings (1 Kgs 1:1), David is now an elderly man, “old, advanced in years” (*zāqēn bā’ bayyāmīm*), and also seemingly in declining health because “though they covered him with bedclothes, he could not get warm” (*wayēkassuhū babbēgādīm wēlō’ yiham lô*). As an attempted solution to the king’s lack of “heat” (*√hmm*) one of David’s courtiers makes the suggestion (1 Kgs 1:2): “Let a young woman be sought for my lord the king, to wait upon the king and be his attendant; and let her lie in your lap and my lord the king will be warm” (*yēbaqšū la’dōnī hammelek na’ārā bētûlâ wē’āmēdâ lipnē hammelek ûtēhî-lô sokenet wēšākēbâ bēhēqekâ wēham la’dōnī hammelek*). Presumably David acquiesces to this suggestion, for the palace then searches for a beautiful young woman throughout the territory Israel and brings the “exceedingly beautiful” (*yāpâ ‘ad-mē’ōd*) Abishag the Shunammite to the king (1 Kgs 1:2-3). Abishag’s responsibilities include being David’s “attendant” (*sokenet*) and “ministering to him” (*tēšārētēhū*). However, the text makes overtly clear in 1 Kgs 1:4 that “the king did not have intercourse with her” (*wēhammelek lō’ yēdā’āh*), the verb “to know” (*√yd’*) being euphemistic for sexual relations. David, the once virile warrior and king, is now infirm and impotent.

I have discussed the meanings of the terms *sokenet* and *√šrt* in previous sections. Both occur in contexts denoting royal service, but Abishag constitutes the only example of these terms associated with a woman and the only attestations in the feminine. As I also indicate in the above discussions, while Abishag might have “served” David as his “attendant,” her intended purpose is as a sexual companion for the king.<sup>648</sup> Abishag’s

---

<sup>648</sup> But see Cogan, *I Kings*, 156, who argues that “there is not the slightest hint that she was the king’s concubine.” However, in his discussion of Adonijah’s request for Abishag he states that “though David had not been intimate with Abishag, everyone at court knew that she had warmed his bed” (176).

beauty (*yāpā* ‘*ad-mē’ōd*) and nubility (*na’ārâ bētûlâ*) are emphasized, and besides serving the king as an attendant, Abishag’s stated purpose is to “lie in [David’s] lap” (*šākēbâ bēḥēqekā*).” This is the same language Nathan uses in 2 Samuel 12:8 to reference David having taken over Saul’s harem, and as we have seen in other examples, the verb *√škb* can be a euphemism for sexual intercourse.<sup>649</sup> Moreover, the specific denial of sexual relations between Abishag indicates that this is against expectation, and Solomon’s violently incensed reaction to Adonijah’s request for Abishag<sup>650</sup> suggests that she is regarded as a consort of David.

Immediately after this explicit information about sexual relations, or the lack thereof, the story turns to Adonijah’s pretensions to the throne (1 Kgs 1:5): “Then Adonijah, son of Haggith, exalted himself saying, ‘I will be king!’ He provided himself with chariots and horses, and an escort of fifty outrunners” (*wa’ādonîyâ ben-ḥaggîṭ mitnašē’ lē’mor ’ānî ’emlek wayya’as lô rekeb ûpārāšîm waḥāmiššîm ’îš rāšîm lēpānāyw*). The placement of Adonijah’s preparations to be David’s successor immediately after the statement that David does not have sexual intercourse with Abishag is not merely a coincidence but indicates a connection between these two statements. It is suggestive that David’s lack of virility is a signal that succession is imminent,<sup>651</sup> and this correlation further underscores the significance of sexuality for power politics as

---

<sup>649</sup> Both Cogan, *ibid.*, and Gray, *I & II Kings*, 77 note that there could be a medical component in Abishag’s “lying” with the king—the transference of heat from Abishag’s body to David’s. This is also Josephus’ interpretation. This may be correct, but it still seems that intimacy is assumed in the “warming” of the aged David’s body.

<sup>650</sup> Cf. Gray, *I & II Kings*, 77.

<sup>651</sup> The procurement of Abishag for David should not be understood as a “test” of David’s virility (so Gray, *I & II Kings*, 77), as it seems from 1 Kings 1 that two camps have already formed around the potential successors. Cf. Cogan, *I Kings*, 156.

portrayed by the David Narrative. Despite his lack of sexual performance, David still holds the power as king, for he names Solomon as his successor and his choice is upheld. Still, the episode that begins with the king's lack of sexual performance ends with a successor to his throne. Solomon even exercises royal authority in pardoning Adonijah. The sun is setting on David's kingship and is rising on Solomon's reign.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I set out to demonstrate that sexuality is a distinct motif in the story of King David and to provide a systematic analysis of this theme within the David Narrative. In particular, I wanted to examine the connection between sexuality and kingship in the David Narrative because I believed that an examination of the sexuality motif in the David Narrative could further our understanding of conceptions of political hegemony and royal ideology in ancient Israel. Finally, I sought to answer why the David Narrative presents the founder of the Judahite dynasty—the great king—in terms of sexuality, especially since sexuality is absent from David’s portrayal in Chronicles and is not a component of the depictions of any other king of Israel and Judah.

In examining the episodes within the David Narrative that contain elements of sexuality, it became clear that sexuality is presented in various ways: sexual relations are explicitly reported in the narratives, reported through characters’ discourse, and sometimes only assumed because of the institution of marriage. As I discussed in chapter 2, the divergences in the presentation of sexuality generally align with the different compositional sources posited for the David Narrative. The stories of David’s early marriages, in which sex is assumed but not specifically stated, are part of the “History of David’s Rise.” Conversely, the episodes in which sexual intercourse is explicitly mentioned all appear in what is traditionally called the “Succession Narrative” and relate directly or indirectly to Absalom’s revolt. Moreover, among episodes that specifically narrate sexual relations, there are two examples of “revision through introduction” that

connect literarily through the motif of sexuality. Thus, the sexuality motif in the David Narrative is not the work of a particular scribal hand or redactional strand, which makes the presence of the motif of sexuality throughout the story of King David all the more remarkable.

Sex, when assumed and not central to the narrative, is licit and helps to justify David's kingship over Israel, as seen in the stories surrounding David's early marriages. David's marriage to a daughter of Saul strengthens his claim to succeed the Saulides as the ruler of Israel. Moreover, Michal's "love" for David during his time in Saul's court and her choice to betray her father in support of David buttresses the narrative argument that David deserves kingship over Israel instead of the Saulides.<sup>652</sup> During David's wanderings in the Judean Negev, his marriage to Abigail and Ahinoam helps cement his ties in the region. Abigail prevents David from incurring bloodguilt, demonstrating that David is not responsible for Nabal's demise, and predicts David's future kingship. In support of Solomon's kingship, Bathsheba's interactions with David in 1 Kings 1 clearly show that David names Solomon as his successor and that, furthermore, David's choice of Solomon had been made for some time, based upon his vow to Bathsheba.

In contrast, when sex does appear in the David Narrative, either in characters' discourse or explicitly narrated, it is illicit and irregular. Sex often represents a political threat that provokes a decisive response. In examples where sex is explicitly narrated or part of an accusation, it seems to be a literary device explaining ruptured interpersonal relations with important political fallout. These stories all explain the purported cause of an already well-known political result. Ishba'al accuses Abner of having sex with his father's consort, and the insulted Abner switches his support to David. Michal criticizes

---

<sup>652</sup> Though not erotic, Michal's brother Jonathan's "love" for David functions similarly.

David's behavior in the cultic procession of the Ark, but David refutes her decisively, which is followed by the note that Michal is childless. David commits adultery with Bathsheba and is punished by Yahweh. Amnon rapes Tamar and as a result is killed by Absalom. Absalom publicizes his sexual usurpation of David's consorts to rally Israel to his side and to provoke a battle with David. Adonijah requests marriage to Abishag, but this incites Solomon to have him executed. I posit that sexuality was used to explain these ruptured political relationships because from the perspective of the authors/editors, sexual offenses are ideologically less dangerous offenses to represent literarily. For one thing, they are often situations without many witnesses (except for 2 Sam 16:20-23). More important, however, is that for the most part sexual offenses do not have major cultic or theological implications but significantly impact the political landscape. Put another way, according to the David Narrative, sexual offenses rarely provoke Yahweh to anger but do make people—particularly men—very angry.

From my analysis of the sexuality theme in the David Narrative, it appears that the motif of sexuality largely functions as a literary device for pro-David writers in their composition of a narrative supporting of the founding king of the Judahite dynasty. Sexuality appears to be a particularly useful tool among the rhetorical strategies related to royal apologetic. Again, I point to the statement by Michel Foucault, quoted in the introduction, that within power relations, sexuality is “endowed with the greatest instrumentality...serving as a point of support for the most varied strategies.” The polyvalence of meaning accorded to sexuality would make it a useful tool for narratives focused on royal justification. It would appear that the writers of the David Narrative



capitalized upon the “great instrumentality” of sexuality over two millennia before Foucault.

Just as the David Narrative is focused on royal justification, it also unintentionally reveals the assumptions of the writers about sexuality and *realpolitik*. It is possible that sexuality was potentially already part of the old lore about David transmitted to the David Narrative and attracted further manifestations along this theme. However, the examples of parallel episodes (e.g., the material about Jonathan and Michal, three episodes focused on sexual access to a king’s consorts) as well as the double “revision through introduction” of 2 Samuel 13:22 and 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25 suggests a deliberate interaction with the sexuality motif on the part of various authors/editors. This extended narrative about David’s attainment and maintenance of kingship over Israel and Judah reveals an intrinsic connection between sexuality and power politics that was likely part of the socio-cultural perspective of the various writers of the David Narrative. Portraying the founding king in terms of sexuality suggests that, for the David Narrative, the royal ideology of David is intertwined with the messy realities of political aggrandizement, including sexual intrigue. In many ways, sexuality functions as cipher for men’s power politics in the David Narrative

That sexuality is not a component of the narrative surrounding the other kings of Israel and Judah and absent from the account of David’s reign in Chronicles probably reflects different agendas and perspectives of the narratives. In the Saul stories before David is introduced, the name of his wife is given but there are no sexual elements present. Saul’s offenses are specifically cultic, and the reason he does not have a lasting dynasty. Likewise, there are no sexual components within the book of Kings after the

end of the David Narrative in 1 Kings 2. However, the book of Kings is primarily concerned with the cultic behavior of kings. Even much of the political information Kings includes is presented from a perspective of the cult (e.g., Jeroboam's secession and "sin"; Jehu's revolt). As we have seen, David's offenses are not cultic, so that kings can still be judged by following the footsteps of David.

The book of Chronicles seems to omit sexual elements that can shed a negative light on David (e.g. Bathsheba), which reflects a distinct royal ideology from that seen in the David Narrative. Moreover, Chronicles does not include episodes that demonstrate weaknesses in David's power or episodes in which David doesn't have hegemony over Israel. Therefore the Chronicler omits stories involving David's wives before he becomes king as well as the sexual episodes related to Absalom's revolt. The Chronicler is focused on highlighting David and Solomon as builders of the Temple—David in preparation, Solomon in actualization. The Chronicler has no reason to include episodes pertaining to the sexuality motif seen in the David Narrative as he is not interested in presenting David's ability to attain and maintain kingship over Israel.

### *Postscript*

As we have seen, sexuality is a motif attested throughout the story of David's life—his rise to power as king, his reign, and the succession of his son Solomon. Not only is sexuality a theme throughout David's life, but sexuality is also a component in two stories of David's ancestors, Tamar and Ruth. In Genesis 38, Tamar is the daughter-in-law of Jacob's son Judah. When Judah prevents Tamar from having a levirate marriage to his youngest son after the older two die, Tamar dresses as a prostitute and takes Judah as a customer. From this sexual encounter, Tamar bears twins, one of whom,

Perez, will continue the line to David. Ruth, for whom the biblical book is named, is David's great-grandmother. A Moabite woman married to a Bethlehemite sojourner, Ruth chooses to accompany her mother-in-law Naomi back to Judah rather than return to her own family after the deaths of her husband, father-in-law, and brother-in-law. Once settled in Bethlehem, Naomi advises Ruth to go furtively to the threshing floor one night while the men are winnowing barley and speak to Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's husband who has been kind to Ruth. While not explicit, Ruth's actions on the threshing floor are sexually charged,<sup>653</sup> and the result of the encounter is that Boaz marries her. Both Tamar and Ruth utilize their sexuality in a strategic manner to leverage their way out of adverse circumstances and enhance their socio-economic positions, concepts of sexuality that also

---

<sup>653</sup> Throughout the book of Ruth there are allusions to the Judah/Tamar levirate marriage and kinsman redeemer (cf. Ruth 4:12 and the beginning of the genealogy with Perez in Ruth 4:18). Specifically regarding Ruth 3, Ruth makes herself attractive before going to the threshing floor (Ruth 3:3). Also, it seems that women apparently are not supposed to be at the threshing floor at night since Naomi instructs Ruth to wait until everyone is asleep to go to Boaz (Ruth 3:3) and in the morning after Ruth has spent the night, Boaz instructs her to leave discretely because "it cannot be known that a woman came to the threshing floor" ('*al-yiwwāda' kī-bā'ā hā'īššā haggōren*) (Ruth 3:14b). Moreover, Ruth waits until Boaz has fallen asleep after eating and drinking, and she "uncovers" (*√glh*) Boaz's "feet" (*rglym*). The verb *√glh* can relate to sexual intercourse (cf. Lev 18:7-8, 20:20-21; Ezek 22:10), and "feet" (*rglym*) can be used euphemistically to mean male genitals (cf. Isa 6:2). Furthermore, Ruth asks for Boaz's "protection," (Ruth 3:9), which he promises in the form of marriage as indicated by chapter 4. Finally, after Boaz makes an oath to Yahweh, he tells Ruth "to stay the night" (*√lyn*) and "lay" (*√skb*) with him until morning (Ruth 3:13). As discussed elsewhere in this study, *√skb* can also occur in sexual contexts (cf. Gen 19:32-35; 2 Sam 11:4, 13:11).

Although in general I think the language and context of Ruth 3 implies a sexual relationship between Ruth and Boaz, it should be noted that the language is suggestive, not explicit. Rather, the writer is being obviously subtle and tantalizing through the use of double-entendres and innuendo. Against an interpretation of an illicit sexual encounter in Ruth 3, one might cite the reputations of Ruth and Boaz as '*ēšet'īš gibbōr hayil*, people of worth/respect/admiration in Ruth 2:1 and 3:11. Furthermore, Boaz also refers to Ruth as "my daughter," which emphasizes a familial relationship more than a sexual one (Ruth 3:11).

For more on sex and gender issues in Ruth, see Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 166-99; Esther Fuchs, "The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. Alice Bach; New York: Routledge, 1999), 127-40; L. Juliana M. Claassens, "Resisting Dehumanization: Ruth, Tamar, and the Quest for Human Dignity," *CBQ* 75 (2012): 659-74; Dorothea Erbele-Küster, "Immigration and Gender Issues in the Book of Ruth," *Voices from the Third World* 25 (2002): 32-39; André LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 84-116; and Mieke Bal, "Heroism and Proper Names, or the Fruits of Analogy," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 42-69.

underlie parts of the David Narrative. It seems fitting that King David, who is so closely associated with sexuality in the book of Samuel, should have two sexually unconventional forbears.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackerman, James S. "Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 41-60.
- Ackerman, Susan. "The Personal is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love (*'āhēb*, *'ahābā*) in the Hebrew Bible." *Vetus Testamentum* (2002): 437-458.
- *When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Ackroyd, Peter R. *The First Book of Samuel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- "The Verb Love—*'āhēb* in the David Jonathan Narratives—a Footnote." *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 213-214.
- Ahituv, Shmuel. "Suzerain or Vassal? Notes on the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan." *Israel Exploration Journal* 43 (1993): 256-257.
- "The Tel Dan Inscription." Pages 477-473 in *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2008.
- Ahlström, Gösta W. "*krkr* and *tpd*." *Vetus Testamentum* 28 (1978): 100-102.
- *The History of Ancient Palestine*. Ed. Diana V. Edelman. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Alexander, Lewis V. "The Origin and Development of the Deuteronomistic History Theory and its Significance for Biblical Interpretation." Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993.

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic, 1981.
- and Frank Kermode. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Amit, Yairah. “The Book of Judges: Fruit of 100 Years of Creativity.” In “A Conversation with Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).” Ed. Raymond F. Person, Jr. *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (2005): 28-35.
- Anderson, A. A. *2 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary 11. Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1989.
- Athas, George. *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 360. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.
- “Setting the Record Straight: What are We Making of the Tel Dan Inscription?” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 51 (2006): 241-55.
- Auld, A. Graeme. “A Factored Response to an Enigma.” Pages 359-368 in *For and Against David: Story and History in the Books of Samuel*. Eds. A. Graeme Auld and Erik Eynikel. Leuven: Peeters, 2010.
- *I & II Samuel*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011.
- and Erik Eynikel, eds. *For and Against David: Story and History in the Books of Samuel*. Leuven: Peeters, 2010.

- Aurelius, Erik. *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Enneateuch*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 319. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003.
- Avishur, Y. "Krkṛ in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic." *Vetus Testamentum* 26 (1976): 257-261.
- Bach, Alice. *Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Bailey, Randall C. *David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10-12*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990.
- Baines, John. "Ancient Egyptian Kingship: Official Forms, Rhetoric, Context." Pages 16-53 in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 270. Ed. John Day. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.
- . *Lethal Love: Feminist Readings of Biblical Love Stories*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- . *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- . *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre and Scholarship on Sisera's Death*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988.

- “Heroism and Proper Names, or the Fruits of Analogy.” Pages 42-69 in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*. Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- Bar-Efrat, Shimeon. *Narrative Art and the Bible*. Trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989.
- “2 Samuel.” Pages 619-667 in *The Jewish Study Bible*. Eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Barré, Michael L. Review of Thomas Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979): 464.
- Barrick, W. Boyd. “On the Removal of the ‘High Places’ in 1-2 Kings.” *Biblica* 55 (1974): 257-259.
- Barstad, H. M. and B. Becking. “Does the Stele from Tel-Dan Refer to a Deity Dôd?” *Biblische Notizen* 77 (1995): 5-12.
- Barthélemy, Dominique, et al. *The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism: Papers of a Joint Research Venture*. *Orbis biblicus et orientalis* 73. Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1986.
- Becking, B. “Het ‘Huis van David’ in een pre-exilische inscriptie uit Tel-Dan,” *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 49 (1995): 108-23.
- Beckman, Gary M. *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
- and Benjamin Foster. “Assyrian Scholarly Texts in the Yale Babylonian Collection.” Pages 1-26 in *A Scientific Humanist: Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs*. Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9. Eds. E. Leichty, et al. Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1988.



- and Theodore J. Lewis, eds. *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*. Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006.
- Ben-Barak, Zafira. “The Legal Background to the Restoration of Michal to David.” *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 5 (1979): 15-29.
- “The Queen Consort and the Struggle for Succession to the Throne.” Pp. 33-40 in *La Femme dans le Proche-Orient Antique: Compte Rendu de la XXXIII<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Paris, 7-10 Juillet 1986*. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1987.
- “The Status and Right of the Gēbîrâ.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 23-34.
- Ben Tor, Amnon. “Hazor and the Chronology of Northern Israel: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 317 (2000): 9-15.
- Ben Zvi, E. “On the Reading ‘bytdwd’ in the Aramaic Stele from Tel Dan.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64 (1994): 25-32.
- Berlin, Adele. “Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David’s Wives.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 23 (1982): 69-85.
- Bienkowski, Piotr. “Dance.” Page 88 in *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*. Eds. Piotr Bienkowski and Alan R. Millard; London: British Museum, 2000.
- Biran, Avraham. *Biblical Dan*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1994.
- “The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 45 (1995): 1-18.

- “The Dancer from Dan.” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 128-132.
- and Joseph Naveh. “An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 43 (1993): 81-98.
- Birch, Bruce C. “The Development of the Tradition of the Anointing of Saul in 1 Sam 9:1-10:16.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971): 55-68.
- *The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy: The Growth and Development of 1 Samuel 7-15*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 27. Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1976.
- “The Choosing of Saul at Mizpah.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 447-457.
- Bird, Phyllis. *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- Bledstein, Adrien Janis. “Tamar and the Coat of Many Colors.” Pages 65-85 in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Series. Ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph. “Theme and Motif in the Succession History (2 Sam XI 2ff) and the Yahwistic Corpus.” Pages 46-67 in *Volume du Congrès Genève, 1965*. *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 15. Leiden: Brill, 1966.
- Borger, Rykle. *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996.
- Borowski, Oded. *Daily Life in Biblical Times*. Atlanta: SBL, 2003.

- Botterweck, G. Johannes and Helmer Ringgren. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. 15 vols. Trans. John T. Willis. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977.
- Brenner, Athalya. *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*. Sheffield: JSOT, 1985.
- *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and “Sexuality” in the Hebrew Bible*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- *Are We Amused? Humor about Women in the Biblical Worlds*. New York: T&T Clark, 2003.
- , ed. *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings*. 2 series. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994 and 2000.
- Brueggeman, Walter. “David and His Theologian.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968): 156-181.
- “Kingship and Chaos (A Study in Tenth Century Theology).” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33 (1971): 317-332.
- “On Trust and Freedom: A Study of Faith in the Succession Narrative.” *Interpretation* 26 (1972): 3-19.
- “On Coping with a Curse: A Study of 2 Sam 16:5-14.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1974): 175-192.
- *David’s Truth in Israel’s Imagination and Memory*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Budde, Karl. *Die Bücher Samuel erklärt*. Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 8. Tübingen and Leipzig: Mohr, 1902.

- Budge, E. A. Wallis and L. W. King. *Annals of the Kings of Assyria: the Cuneiform Texts with Translations, Transliterations, etc., from the Original Documents in the British Museum*. Vol. 1. London: British Museum, 1902.
- Bunimovitz, Shlomo and Avraham Faust. "Chronological Separation, Geographical Segregation or Ethnic Demarcation? Ethnography and the Iron Age Low Chronology." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 322 (2001): 1-10.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 2 eds. New York and London: Routledge, 1990; 1999.
- Byrne, R. "Letting David Go." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34 (2008): 30, 78.
- Caird, G. B. *The First and Second Books of Samuel. Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1953.
- Camp, Claudia V. *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*. Decatur, Ga.: Almond Press, 1985.
- *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Campbell, Anthony. *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1-2 Kings 10)*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 17. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986.
- *1 Samuel*. Forms of the Old Testament Literature 7. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Carlson, R. A. *David the Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964.

- Carr, David M. *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Caspari, Wilhelm. “The Literary Type and Historical Value of 2 Samuel 15-20.” Pages 59-88 in *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressman and Other Scholars, 1906-1923*. Sheffield: Almond, 1991.
- Claassens, L. Juliana M. “Resisting Dehumanization: Ruth, Tamar, and the Quest for Human Dignity.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75 (2012): 659-74.
- Clines, David J. A. and Tamara C. Eskenazi, eds. *Telling Queen Michal’s Story: An Experiment in Comparative Interpretation*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 119. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- Coats, George W. “Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 14-26.
- Cogan, Mordechai. *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 10. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- and Hayim Tadmor. *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 11. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988.
- Cohen, Martin A. “The Role of the Shilonite Priesthood in the United Monarchy of Ancient Israel.” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 36 (1965): 83.
- Collon, Dominique. “Dance in Ancient Mesopotamia.” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 97-102.

- Comstock, Gary David. "Love, Power and Competition among Men in Hebrew Scripture: Jonathan as Unconventional Nurturer." Pages 3-29 in *Religion, Homosexuality, and Literature*. Gay Men's Issues in Religious Studies 3. Eds. Michael L. Stemmler and José Ignacio Cabezón. Las Colinas, Tex: Monument, 1992.
- Conroy, Charles. *Absalom! Absalom! Narrative and Language in 2 Sam 13-20*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978.
- Coogan, Michael. *God and Sex: What the Bible Really Says*. New York: Twelve, 2010.
- Cook, S. A. "Notes on the Composition of 2 Samuel." *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 16 (1900): 145-177.
- Cooper, Jerrold. "Gendered Sexuality in Sumerian Love Poetry." Pages 84-97 in *Sumerian Gods and their Representations*. Eds. I.L. Finkel and M. J. Geller. Groningen: Styx, 1997.
- "Virginity in Mesopotamia." Pages 91-108 in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001*. 2 vols. Eds. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002.
- Cross, Frank Moore. "The Structure of the Deuteronomistic History." Pages 9-24 in *Perspectives in Jewish Learning*. Annual of the College of Jewish Studies 3. Chicago: College of Jewish Studies, 1968.
- Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973.

- From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- and David Noel Freedman. *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*. Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1975.
- Cryer, Frederick H. “David’s Rise to Power and the Death of Abner: An Analysis of 1 Samuel xxvi 14-16 and Its Redaction-Critical Implications.” *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 385-394.
- “On the Recently Discovered ‘House of David’ Inscription.” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 8 (1994): 3-19.
- “A ‘Betdawd’ Miscellany: Dwd, Dwd’ or Dwdh?” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 9 (1995): 52-58.
- Dalley, Stephanie. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.
- Damrosch, David. *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature*. San Francisco: Harper & Row San Francisco, 1987.
- Darnell, John C. “A Midsummer Night’s Succubus: The Herdsman’s Encounters in P. Berlin 3024, the Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling, the Songs of the Drinking Place, and the Ancient Egyptian Love Poetry. Pages 99-140 in *Opening the Tablet Box: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Benjamin R. Foster*. Eds. Sarah C. Melville and Alice L. Slotsky. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

- Davidson, Richard M. "Did King David Rape Bathsheba? A Case Study in Narrative Theology." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17 (2006): 81–95.
- Davies, Philip R. *In Search of "Ancient Israel."* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 142. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
- "Bytdwd and swkt dwyd: A Comparison." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64 (1994): 23-24.
- "House of David' Built on Sand: The Sins of the Biblical Maximizers." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20 (1994): 54-55.
- Day, John. "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy." Pages 72-90 in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Ed. John Day.
- , ed. *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 270. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Day, Peggy. "Concubine." Page 273 in *Eerdmans's Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000.
- "Yahweh's Broken Marriages as Metaphoric Vehicle in the Hebrew Bible Prophets." Pages 219-241 in *Sacred-Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*. Eds. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008.
- Delekat, Lienhard. "Tendenz und Theologie der David-Salomo-Erzählung." Pages 26-36 in *Das ferne und nahe Wort: Festschrift Leonard Rost zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 30. November gewidmet*. Ed. Fritz Maass. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 105. Berlin: Töpelmann, 1967.



- Demsky, Aaron. "On Reading Ancient Inscriptions: The Monumental Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan." *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 23 (1995): 29-35.
- "Reading Northwest Semitic Inscriptions." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70 (2007): 68-74.
- Dennis, Trevor. *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Dever, William G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Dewrell, Heath. "Human Beings as Ritual Objects: A Reexamination of Sefire IA 35b-42." *Maarav* 17 (2009): 31-55.
- Dick, Michael B. "The 'History of David's Rise to Power' and the Neo-Babylonian Succession Apologies." Pages 3-19 in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts*. Eds. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004.
- Dietrich, Walter. *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk*. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 108. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972.
- "Die Erzählung von David und Goliath in I Sam 17." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 108 (1996): 172-191.
- *The Early Monarchy in Israel: The Tenth Century B.C.E.* Trans. Joachim Vette. Biblical Encyclopedia 3. Atlanta: SBL, 2007. Translation of *Die frühe*

- Königszeit in Israel: 10. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* Biblische Enzyklopädie 3. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997.
- M. Dijkstra, "An Epigraphic and Historical Note on the Stela of Tel Dan," *Biblische Notizen* 74 (1994): 10-14;
- Dion, Paul-Eugène. *Les Araméens à l'âge du fer: histoire politique et structures sociales*. Études bibliques, nouvelle série 34. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1997.
- "The Tel Dan Stele and Its Historical Significance." Pages 145-156 in *Michael: Historical, Epigraphical, and Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer*. Eds. Yitzhak Avishur and Robert Deutsch. Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999.
- Dossin, Georges. *Correspondence de Iasmah-Addu*. Archives royales de Mari V. Paris: Impr. nationale, 1952.
- Driver, Samuel. *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel: With an Introduction on Hebrew Palaeography and the Ancient Versions, and Facsimiles of Inscriptions*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1890.
- Edelman, Diana V. *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 121. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991.
- Ehrlich, Carl S. "The BYTDWD-Inscription and Israelite Historiography: Taking Stock after Half a Decade of Research." Pages 57-71 in *The World of the Aramaeans: Studies in History and Archaeology in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*. Eds. P. M. Michèle Daviau, John W. Wevers, and Michael Weigl. Vol. 2. Journal for the

- Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 325. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. *God's Phallus and other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.
- Eissfeldt, Otto. "Die Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament." *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 72 (1947):71-76
- The Old Testament: An Introduction*. Trans. Peter R. Ackroyd. 2 eds. Oxford: Blackwell, 1965; New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- Engnell, Ivan. *Gamla testamentet: En traditionshistorisk inledning*. Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1945.
- "The Pentateuch." Pages 50-67 in *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament*. Ed. Ivan Engnell. Trans. John T. Willis with Helmer Ringgren. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969.
- Erbele-Küster, Dorothea. "Immigration and Gender Issues in the Book of Ruth." *Voices from the Third World* 25 (2002): 32-39.
- Exum, J. Cheryl. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1993.
- Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996.
- Eynikel, Erik. *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*. Oudtestamentische studiën 33. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

- Fewell, Danna Nolan. "Feminist Criticism." Pages 268-282 in *To Each Its Own Meaning: Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Eds. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes. Rev. ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.
- and David M. Gunn. *Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.
- Fincke, Jeanette C. "The Babylonian Texts of Nineveh," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 50 (2003): 111-149.
- Finkelstein, Israel. "The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View." *Levant* 28 (1996): 177-187.
- "The Stratigraphy and Chronology of Megiddo and Beth-shan in the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE." *Tel Aviv* 23 (1996): 170-84.
- "Bible Archaeology or Archaeology of Palestine in the Iron Age? A Rejoinder." *Levant* 30 (1998): 167-174.
- "Hazor and the North in the Iron Age: A Low Chronology Perspective." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 314 (1999): 55-70.
- "A Great United Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives." Pages 3-28 in *One God-One Cult-One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*. Eds. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 405. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010.
- and Amihai Mazar. *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*. Archaeology and Biblical Studies 17. Ed. B. Schmidt. Atlanta: SBL, 2007.

Fishbane, Michael. "The Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters."

*Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 314-315.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*. Rev. Ed. Rome: Editrice Pontifico, 1995.

Flanagan, James W. "Court History or Succession Document? A Study of 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 172-181.

Fleming, Daniel E. *Time at Emar: The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner's Archive*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000.

———*The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Fokkelman, J. P. *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*. Vols. 1: *King David (II Sam 9-20 & I Kings 1-2)* and 2: *The Crossing Fates (I Sam 13-31 & II Sam 1)*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981; 1986.

Foster, Benjamin L. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation, Analogues, Criticism*. New York: Norton, 2001.

Foster, John L. *Love Songs of the New Kingdom*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction (The Will to Knowledge)*; vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*; vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Random House, 1978, 1985, 1998.

Fox, Michael V. *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

- Fowler, Barbara Hughes. *Love Lyrics of Ancient Egypt*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- Frandsen, Paul. *Incestuous and Close-Kin Marriage in Ancient Egypt and Persia. An Examination of the Evidence*. Copenhagen : Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009.
- Freedman, David Noel. Review of Gevirtz. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964): 201-202.
- “The Refrain in David’s Lament.” Pages 263-274 in *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980.
- Friedman, Richard E. *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deutoronomistic and Priestly Works*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 22. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981.
- Frymer-Kensky Tikva. *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*. New York: Free Press, 1992.
- “Virginity in the Bible.” Pages 79-96 in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories*. New York: Schocken Books, 2002.
- “Israel.” Pages 975-1046 in *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*. Ed. Raymond Westbrook. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Fuchs, Esther. “The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible.” Pages 127-140 in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*. Ed. Alice Bach. New York: Routledge, 1999.

- *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman*.  
Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 310. Sheffield:  
Sheffield Academic, 2000.
- “Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible for Women: the Neoliberal Turn in Contemporary  
Feminist Scholarship.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24 (2008): 45-65.
- Gabbay, Uri. “Dance in Textual Sources from Ancient Mesopotamia.” *Near Eastern  
Archaeology* 66 (2003): 104.
- Galil, Gershon. “A Re-arrangement of the Fragments of the Tel Dan Inscription and the  
Relations between Israel and Aram.” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 133  
(2001): 16-21.
- Garsiel, Moshe. “The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach.” *Catholic  
Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 244–262.
- George, Andrew R. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and  
Cuneiform Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Gerlman, G. “Die Wurzel *šlm*.” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84  
(1973): 1-14.
- Gerstenberger, Erhard. *Leviticus: A Commentary*. Trans. Douglas W. Stott. Louisville:  
Westminster Johns Knox, 1996.
- Gevirtz, Stanley. *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*. Studies in Ancient Oriental  
Civilization 32. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Glück, J. J. “Merab or Michal.” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77  
(1965): 72-81.

- Goedicke, Hans. "Was Magic Used in the Harem Conspiracy against Ramesses III? (P. Rollin and P. Lee)." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 49 (1963): 71-92.
- Good, Edwin M. *Irony in the Old Testament*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992.
- Goss, Robert E. "Jonathan and David." Pages 318-319 in *Reader's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Ed. Timothy Murphy. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000.
- Grabbe, Lester L., ed. *Can a 'History of Israel' Be Written?* *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series* 245. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Graves-Brown, Carolyn. *Sex and Gender in Ancient Egypt: 'Don Your Wig for a Joyful Hour.'* Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2008.
- Gray, John. *I & II Kings: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: SCM Press, 1970.
- Grayson, A. Kirk. *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)*. *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia*. Vol 1. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.
- Greenberg, David F. *The Construction of Homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Greenstein, Edward L. "Kirta." Pages 9-48 in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World 9. Ed. Simon B. Parker. Atlanta: SBL, 1997.
- Gressmann, Hugo. "The Oldest History Writing in Israel." Pages 9-58 in *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressmann and Other Scholars 1906-1923*.



- Ed. David M. Gunn. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 116*. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991.
- Griffiths, John Gwyn. "Love as a Disease." Pages 349-364 in *Studies in Egyptology: Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*. Ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll. 2 vols. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990.
- Grønbeck, Jakob. *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (1 Sam 15-2 Sam 5): Tradition und Komposition*. Acta theologica danica 10. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1971.
- Gros Louis, Kenneth R. R. "The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel." *Semeia* 8 (1977): 15-33.
- Gunn, David M. "Traditional Composition in the 'Succession Narrative.'" *Vetus Testamentum* (1976): 214-229.
- *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation*. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 6*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978.
- *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story*. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 14*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980.
- "Narrative Criticism." Pages 201-229 in *To Each Its Own Meaning*. Eds. Steven L. McKenzie, Stephen R. Haynes.
- Gunkel, Hermann. "Die israelitische Literatur." Pages 53-112 in *Die orientalischen Literaturen*. Ed. P. Hinneber. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berlin: Teubner, 1925.
- Hackett, Jo Ann. "1 and 2 Samuel." Pages 91-101 in *Women's Bible Commentary*. Eds. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Expanded ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

Hagelia, Hallvard. "How Important is the Tel Dan Stele, except for Its Relation to the Bible?" *Svensk exegetiskårsbok* 69 (2004): 155-66.

———*The Tel Dan Inscription: A Critical Investigation of Recent Research on Its Paleography and Philology*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2006.

———*The Dan Debate: The Tel Dan Inscription in Recent Research*. Recent Research in Biblical Studies. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Hagenbuchner, Albertine. *Die Korrespondenz der Hethiter*. 2. Teil. Texte der Hethiter 16. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989.

Halperin, David M. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Halpern, Baruch. *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 25. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981.

———*The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.

———"The Stela from Dan: Epigraphic and Historical Considerations." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 (1994): 63-80.

———"The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography." Pages 44-75 in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 228. Eds. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

———*David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001.

- and David S. Vanderhooft. “The Editions of Kings in the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.E.” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 62 (1991): 179-244.
- Heacock, Anthony. *Jonathan Loved David: Manly Love in the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Sex*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011.
- Helminiak, Daniel A. *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality*. San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 1994.
- Hermann, Alfred. *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung*. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1959.
- Hertzberg, Hans Wilhelm. *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. Trans. John S. Bowden. Old Testament Library. London: SCM, 1964. Repr. Philadelphia: Westminster, n.d.
- Translation of *Die Samuelbücher*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Das Alte Testament Deutsch 10. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960.
- Herzfeld, Michael. “‘As in Your Own House:’ Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society.” Pages 75-89 in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*. Ed. David D. Gilmore. Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987.
- Hess, Richard S. *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Hillers, Delbert R. “A Note on Some Treaty Terminology in the Old Testament.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 176 (1964): 46-47.
- *Treaty-Curses in the Old Testament Prophets*. *Bibliotheca orientalis* 16. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964.

- Hirsh, Jody. "In Search of Role Models." Pages 83-91 in *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish*. Eds. Christie Balka and Andy Rose. Boston: Beacon, 1989.
- Hirschfeld, Magnus II. "David und der heilige Augustin, zwei Bisexuelle." *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 2 (1900): 288-294.
- Hoffner, Harry A. "Propaganda and Political Justification in Hittite Historiography." Pages 49-62 in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*. Eds. H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.
- "The Royal Cult in Hatti." Pages 132-151 in *Text, Artifact, and Image*. Eds. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis.
- Hoftijzer, J. "Absalom and Tamar: A Case of Fratriarchy?" Pages 54-61 in *Schrift en Uitleg. Festschrift W. H. Gispen*. Kampen: Kok, 1970.
- Hölscher, G. *Geschichtsschreibung in Israel. Untersuchungen zum Yahwisten und Elohisten*. Lund: Gleerup, 1952.
- Horner, Thomas M. *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.
- Hutton, Jeremy. *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009.
- Ilan, Tal. "Dance and Gender in Ancient Jewish Sources." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 136.

- Irvine, S. "The Last Battle of Hadadezer." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 341-47.
- Ishida, Tomoo. *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 142. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977.
- "The Succession Narrative and Esarhaddon's Apology: A Comparison." Pages 166-173 in *Ah, Assyria...: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*. Eds. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991.
- Jackson, J. J. "David's Throne: Patterns in the Succession Story." *Canadian Journal of Theology* 11 (1965): 183-195.
- Jasper, David. "Literary Readings of the Bible." Pages 21-34 in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. J. Barton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Jepsen, Alfred. *Die Quellen des Königsbuches*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Halle: Niemeyer, 1953.
- Jobling, David. *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible*. 2 vols. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1978.
- *I Samuel*. Berit Olam. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Kaiser, Otto. "David und Jonathan. Tradition, Redaktion und Geschichte in I Sam 16-20: Ein Versuch." *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 66 (1990): 281-296.
- Kallai, Z. "The King of Israel and the House of David." *Israel Exploration Journal* 43 (1993): 248.

- Kamsler, Harold M. "Hesed: Mercy or Loyalty?" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 27 (1999): 183-185.
- Kaswalder, P. and M. Pazzini. "La stele aramaica di Tel Dan." *Revista Biblica* 2 (1994): 193-201.
- Keil, Karl Friedrich and Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880.
- Keys, Gillian. *The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the 'Succession Narrative.'* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Kilmer, Anne. "Music and Dance in Western Asia." Pages 2601-2615 in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vol. IV. Ed. Jack M. Sasson. New York: Scribner, 1995.
- Kim, Hyun Chul Paul and M. Fulgence Nyengele, "Murder S/He Wrote? A Cultural and Psychological Reading of 2 Samuel 11–12." Pages 95-116 in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible*. Semeia Studies 44. Ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- King, Phillip J. and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Kirk-Duggan, Cheryl A. "Slingshots, Ships, and Personal Psychosis: Murder, Sexual Intrigue, and Power in the Lives of David and Othello." Pages 37-70 in *Pregnant Passion*. Ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan.
- , ed. *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible*. Semeia Studies 44. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Kitchen, Kenneth A. "The King List of Ugarit." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 9 (1977): 140.

- “A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BCE, and Deity \*Dod as Dead as the Dodo?” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76 (1997): 29-44.
- Kittel R. *A History of the Hebrews*. Trans. H. W. Hogg and E. B. Speirs. 2 vols. London: Theological Translation Library VI, 1898.
- Klein, Jacob. “Sumerian Kingship and the Gods.” Pages 115-131 in *Text, Artifact, and Image*. Eds. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis.
- Klein, Johannes. *David versus Saul: Ein Beitrag zum Erzählsystem der Samuelbücher*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002.
- Klein, Ralph W. *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary 11. Waco: Word Books, 1983.
- Knapp, Andrew. “Royal Apology in the Ancient Near East.” Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2012.
- Knauf, E. A. “Das “Huis Davids” in der alt-aramäische Inschrift vom Tel Dan.” *Bibel und Kirche* (1996): 9-10.
- , Albert de Pury, and Thomas Römer. “\**BaytDawîd* ou \**BaytDôd*? Une relecture de la nouvelle inscription de Tel Dan.” *Biblische Notizen* 72 (1994): 60-69.
- Knoppers, Gary N. and J. G. McConville, eds. *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000.
- Knudtzon, J. A. *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*. Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 2. Orig. pub. 1915. Repr. Aalen: Otto Zeller, 1964.
- Knust, Jennifer Wright. *Unprotected Texts: The Bible’s Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire*. New York: HarperOne, 2011.

- Koenig, Sara M. *Isn't This Bathsheba? A Study in Characterization*. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011.
- Kooij, Arie van der. "The Story of David and Goliath: The Early History of Its Text." *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 68 (1992): 118-31.
- Kottsieper, I. "Die Inschrift vom Tell Dan und die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Aram-Damaskus und Israel in der 1. Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends vor Christus." Pages 475-500 in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf: Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient. Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahre mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen Unter Mitwirkung von Hanspeter Schaudig herausgegeben von Manfred Dietrich und I. Kottsieper*. Alter Orient und Altes Testament 250. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998.
- "Tel Dan Inscription (*KAI* 310) and the Political Relations between Aram-Damascus and Israel in the First Half of the First Millennium BCE." Pages 104-34 in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*. Ed. Lester L. Grabbe. London: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Kratz, Reinhard G. *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*. Trans. John Bowden. London: T&T Clark, 2005. Translation of *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments*. Göttingen: Bandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.
- and Hermann Spieckermann, eds. *One God—One Cult—One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 405. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010.



- Kraus, Hans Joachim. *Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im Alten Testament*. Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 13. Tübingen: Mohr, 1951.
- *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament*. Trans. G. Buswell. Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1966.
- Kuenen, Abraham. *He ontstaan van de Historische Boeken des Ouden Verbonds*. Vol. 1 of *Historisch-kritisch onderzoek naar het ontstaan en de verzameling van de boeken des Ouden Verbonds*. 2 vols. Leiden: Engels, 1861.
- *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Bücher des alten Testaments*. Vol. 1, Part 2 of *Die historischen Bücher des alten Testaments*. Trans. T. Weber. Leipzig: Reisland, 1890.
- LaCocque, André. *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Landgráfová, Renata and Hana Navrátilová. *Sex and the Golden Goddess: Ancient Egyptian Love Songs in Context*. Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, 2009.
- Langlamet, François. "Pour ou contre Salomon? La rédaction prosalomonienne de 1 Rois i-ii." Parts 1-2. *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976): 321-79; 481-528.
- "Absalom et les concubines de son père. Recherches sur II Sam., XVI, 21-22." *Revue Biblique* 84 (1977): 161-209.
- "De 'David, fils de Jessé' au 'Livre de Jonathan:' Deux éditions divergentes de l' 'Ascension de David' en 1 Sam 16-2 Sam 1?" *Revue Biblique* 100 (1993): 321-357.
- "'David—Jonathan—Saül' ou le 'livre de Jonathan:' 1 Sam 16,14-2 Sam 1,27." *Revue Biblique* 101 (1994): 326-354.

- Lasine, Stewart. "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 (1984): 37-59.
- Lehmann, R. G. and M. Reichel. "DOD und ASIMA in Tell Dan." *Biblische Notizen* 77 (1995): 23-31.
- Leick, Gwendolyn. *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Lemaire, André. "The United Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon." Pages 85-108 in *Ancient Israel*. Ed. Hershel Shanks. Prentice Hall College Division, 1988.
- "La dynastie davidique [by *dw*ḏ] dans deux inscriptions ouest-sémitiques du IX<sup>e</sup> s. av. J.-C." *Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul vicino oriente antico* 11 (1994): 17-19.
- "Epigraphie palestinienne: Nouveaux documents I Fragment de stèle araméenne de Tell Dan (IX<sup>e</sup> s. av. J.-C.)." *Henoch* 16 (1994): 87-93.
- "House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 3 (1994): 30-37.
- "The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 81 (1998): 3-14.
- "Toward a Redactional History of the Book of Kings." Pages 446-461 in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*. Eds. G. N. Knoppers and J. G. McConville. Trans. Samuel W. Heldenbrand. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000. Translation from "Vers l'Histoire de la Rédaction des Livres des Rois." *ZAW* 98 (1986): 221-236.

- Lemche, Niels-Peter. "Bemerkungen über einen Paradigmenwechsel aus Anlaß einer neuentdeckten Inschrift." Pages 99-108 in *Meilenstein: Festgabe für Herbert Donner zum 16. Februar 1995*. Ägypten und Altes Testament 30. Eds. M. Weippert and Stefan Timm. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995.
- *The Israelites in History and Tradition*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- and Thomas L. Thompson. "Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 19 (1994): 3-22.
- Levenson, Jon. "1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978): 11-28.
- and Baruch Halpern. "The Political Import of David's Wives." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 507-518.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham, ed. Rev. ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Levinson, Bernard M. "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah." *Vetus Testamentum* 51 (2001): 511-534.
- Linafelt, Tod. "Taking Women in Samuel: Readers/Responses/Responsibility." Pages 99-113 in *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Ed. Danna Nolan Fewell. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

- *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon. Essays in Honor of David M. Gunn.* Eds. Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp, and Timothy Beal. New York: T&T Clark, 2010.
- Lingen, Anton van der. *David en Saul in I Samuel 16-II Samuel 5: verhalen in politiek en religie.* Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1983.
- Lipiński, Edward. *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics.* 2 vols. *Orientalia lovaniensia analecta.* Leuven: Peeters, 1975.
- *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion.* Leuven: Peeters, 2000.
- Lipka, Hilary B. *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006.
- Liverani, Mario. “The Great Powers Club.” Pages 15-27 in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations.* Eds. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- *Israel’s History and the History of Israel.* Trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies. London: Equinox, 2005.
- Livingstone, Alasdair. “Ashurbanipal: Literate or Not?” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* (2007): 98-118.
- Lohfink, Norbert. “Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks.” Pages 87-100 in *Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff.* Ed. Jörg Jeremias and Lothar Perlitt. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981.
- Long, B. O. “A Darkness between Brothers: Solomon and Adonijah.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 19 (1981): 79-94.

- “Wounded Beginnings: David and Two Sons.” Pages 26-34 in *Images of Man and God: Old Testament Short Stories in Literary Focus*. Ed. B. O. Long. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981.
- Loprieno, Antonio. “Searching for a Common Background: Egyptian Love Poetry and the Biblical Song of Songs.” Pages 105-135 in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs*. Ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn. New York: de Gruyter, 2005.
- Luckenbill, Daniel D. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1927.
- Lust, Johan. “The Story of David and Goliath in Hebrew and in Greek.” Pages 121-128 in *The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism*. Eds. Dominique Barthélmy, et al. Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986.
- Machinist, Peter. “Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria.” Pages 152-188 in *Text, Artifact, and Image*. Eds. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis.
- Malamat, Abraham. “Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy.” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 28 (1965): 63-64.
- Margalit, B. “The Old Aramaic Inscription of Hazael from Dan.” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 26 (1994): 317-20.
- “The Old Aramaic Stele from Tel Dan.” *Nouvelles assyriologiques breves et utilitaires* 1 (1994): 20-21.
- Martino, Stefano de. “Music, Dance, and Processions in Hittite Anatolia.” Pages 2661-2667 in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vol. IV. Ed. Jack M. Sasson.

- Mathieu, Bernard. *La Poésie Amoureuse de L'Égypt Ancienne: Recherches sur un genre littéraire au Nouvel Empire*. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1997.
- Matthews, Victor H. "Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21 (1991):13-21.
- "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* (1992): 3-11.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift*. Trans. W. D. Halls. New York: W. W. Norton, 1990.
- Mayes, A. D. H. "The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978): 1-19.
- Mazar, Amihai. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990.
- "Iron Age Chronology: A Reply to I. Finkelstein." *Levant* 29 (1997): 157-167.
- "Ritual Dancing in the Iron Age." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 126-127.
- "Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy." Pages 29-58 in *One God-One Cult-One Nation*. Ed. Reinhard G. Kratz.
- McCarter, P. Kyle. *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 8. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- "The Apology of David." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 489-504.
- "Plots, True or False': The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic." *Interpretation* 35 (1981): 355-367.
- II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 9. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984.

- “The Historical David.” *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 117-129.
- *Ancient Inscriptions: Voices from the Biblical World*. Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1996.
- McCarthy, Dennis J. *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*. Analecta biblica 21. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963.
- McKenzie, Steven L. *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 33. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984.
- *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 42. Leiden: Brill, 1991.
- Review of Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*. *Review of Biblical Literature*. January 15, 1998.
- *King David: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- “The So-Called Succession Narrative in the Deuteronomistic History.” Pages 123-135 in *Die Sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids: neue Einsichten und Anfragen*. Eds. Albert de Pury and Thomas Römer. Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.
- “The Trouble with Kingship.” Pages 286-314 in *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*. Eds. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Maachi. JSOTSup 306. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.

- “LeDavid! (For David) ‘Except in the Matter of Uriah the Hittite’.” Pages 307-314 in *For and Against David*. Eds. A. Graeme Auld and Erik Eynikel.
- Meier, Samuel A. *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 45. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Mendenhall, George E. *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955.
- Mettinger, Tryggve N. D. *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*. Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series 8. Lund: Gleerup, 1976.
- Meyers, Carol. *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Ancient Israelite Women*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
- Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Millard, Alan R. “Absence of Word Divider Proves Nothing.” *Biblical Archaeological Review* 20 (1994): 68-69.
- Miller, Patrick D. and J. J. M. Roberts. *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the “Ark Narrative” of 1 Samuel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.
- Milstein, Sara J. “Reworking Ancient Texts: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature.” Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2010.
- Miscall, Peter D. *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986.



- Moran, William L. "The Ancient Near Eastern Background to the Love of God in Deuteronomy." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1963): 77-87.
- "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1963): 173-176.
- , ed. *The Amarna Letters*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Morgenstern, Julian. "David and Jonathan." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78 (1959): 322-25.
- Mowinckel, Sigmund. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas. 2 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1967.
- Müller, H.-P. "Die aramäische Inschrift von Tel Dan." *Zeitschrift für Althebräistik* 7 (1995): 121-39.
- Na'aman, Nadav. "The Campaign of Mesha against Horonaim." *Biblische Notizen* 73 (1994): 27-30.
- Nelson, Richard D. *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 18. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981.
- "A Response to Thomas C. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*." Pages 5-14 in "In Conversation with Thomas Römer." Ed. Raymond F. Person, Jr.
- Nissinen, Martti. *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.
- "Die Liebe von David und Jonatan als Frage der modernen Exegese." *Biblica* 80 (1999): 250-263.

- *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World 12. Atlanta: SBL, 2003.
- *Sacred-Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*. Eds. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008.
- Noll, Kurt L. *The Faces of David*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 15. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1997.
- “The God Who is Among the Danites.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 80 (1998): 3-23.
- Noth, Martin. *Das Buch Josua*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Handbuch zum Alten Testament I/7. Tübingen: Mohr, 1953.
- *The Deuteronomistic History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 182. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991. Translation of the first part of *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967, orig. 1943.
- *The History of Israel*. Trans. Peter R. Ackroyd. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.
- O’Brien, Mark A. *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*. Orbis biblicus et orientalis 92. Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989.
- O’Connor, M. “The Women in the Book of Judges.” *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 277-93.

- Oden, Robert A., Jr. "The Place of Covenant in the Religion of Israel." Pages 429-447 in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*. Eds. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Olmo Lete, Gregorio del. *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. Vol. 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Olyan, Saul. "Surpassing the Love of Women": Another Look at 2 Samuel 1:26 and the Relationship of David and Jonathan." Pages 7-16 in *Authorizing Marriage*. Ed. Mark D. Jordan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. Repr., *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible*. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011.
- Otten, Heinrich von. *Die Apologie Hattusilis III: das Bild der Überlieferung*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981.
- Padgug, Robert A. "Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History." Pages 14-34 in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*. Eds. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons with Robert A. Padgug. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- Pardee, Dennis. *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World 10. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Review of George Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 65 (2006): 289-91.
- Parker, Heather D. D. "The Levant Comes of Age: The Ninth Century B.C.E. through Script Traditions." Ph.D. diss.: Johns Hopkins University, 2013.

- Parker, Simon B. "The Historical Composition of *Krt* and the Cult of El." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977): 173-174.
- "The Hebrew Bible and Homosexuality." *Quarterly Review* 11 (1991): 4-19.
- Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University, 1997.
- Parpola, Simo and Kazuko Watanabe. *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*. State Archives of Assyria II. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988.
- and Robert M. Whiting. *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001*. 2 vols. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002.
- Patai, Raphael. *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959.
- Peleg, Yaron. "Love at First Sight? David, Jonathan, and the Biblical Politics of Gender." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30 (2005): 171-189.
- Perry, Menachem and Meir Sternberg. "The King Through Ironic Eyes: Biblical Narrative and the Literary Reading Process." *Poetics Today* 7 (1986): 275-322.
- Person, Raymond F., Jr., ed. "In Conversation with Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*." London: T&T Clark, 2005." *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (2005): 3-49.
- Phillips, Anthony. "David's Linen Ephod." *Vetus Testamentum* 19 (1969): 485-487.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian. "The Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host: Introduction to the Laws of Hospitality." Pages 14-30 in *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology*:

- Mediterranean Rural Communities and Social Change: Acts of the Mediterranean Sociological Conference, July 1963*. Ed. J. G. Persitany. Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1963.
- Polzin, Robert. *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Porter, J. R. "The Interpretation of 2 Samuel vi and Psalm cxxxii." *Journal of Theological Studies* 5 (1954): 172-173.
- Pritchard, James B. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Provan, Iain W. *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 172. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988.
- Puech, Émile. "La Stèle Araméenne de Dan: Bar Hadad II et La Coalition des Omrides et de La Maison de David." *Revue biblique* 101 (1994): 215-41.
- Pury, Albert de, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Maachi, eds. *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 306. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Quesada, Jan Jaynes. "King David and Tidings of Death: 'Character Response' Criticism." Pages 3-18 in *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon. Essays in Honor of David M. Gunn*. Eds. Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp, and Timothy Beal. New York: T&T Clark, 2010.
- Rabin, C. "The Origin of the Hebrew Word *Pīlgeš*." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25 (1974): 353-64.

- Rad, Gerhard von. "The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel." Pages 166-204 in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966.
- Rainey, Anson. "The House of David and the House of the Deconstructionists." *Biblical Archaeological Review* 20 (1994): 47.
- Redford, Susan. *The Harem Conspiracy: the Murder of Ramses III*. Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002.
- Ridout, G. P. "Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 7, 9-10; 1 Kings 1-2)." Ph.D. diss.; Graduate Theological Union, 1971.
- "The Rape of Tamar." Pages 75-84 in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*. Eds. J. J. Jackson and M. Kessler. Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974.
- Rofé, Alexander. "The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology." Pages 117-151 in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*. Eds. J. Neusner, B. Levine and E. Frerichs. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Rollston, Christopher A. "Inscription, Tel Dan." Page 48 in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol. 3. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.
- Römer, Thomas. *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Socological, Historical, and Literary Introduction*. London: T&T Clark, 2005.
- and Loyse Bonjour. *L'homosexualité dans le Proche-Orient ancien et la Bible*. Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2005.

- and Albert de Pury. “Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues.” Pages 24-41 in *Israel Constructs its History*. Eds. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi.
- Rooke, Deborah W. “Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy.” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Ed. John Day.
- Rosenberg, Joel. *King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Rost, Leonhard. *The Succession to the Throne of David*. Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship 1. Trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982. Translation of *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1926.
- Roth, Martha T. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World 6. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Rowe, Jonathan Y. *Sons or Lovers: an Interpretation of David and Jonathan’s Friendship*. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 575. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012.
- Rubin, Gayle. “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex.” Pages 157-210 in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. Ed. R. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1983.

- Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. *The Meaning of Hēsed in the Hebrew Bible*. Missoula, Mo.: Harvard Semitic Museum, 1978.
- “Loyalty and Love: The Language of Human Interconnections in the Hebrew Bible.” Pages 215-219 in *Backgrounds for the Bible*. Eds. Michael Patrick O’Connor and David Noel Freedman. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987.
- “Love (OT).” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4:375-381.
- Sasson, V. “The Old Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan: Philological, Literary, and Historical Aspects.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 40 (1995): 11-30.
- Schniedewind, William. “Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu’s Revolt.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 302 (1996): 75-90.
- Scholz, Susanne. *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Schroer, Silvia and Thomas Staubli. “Saul, David and Jonathan—The Story of a Triangle? A Contribution to the Issue of Homosexuality in the First Testament.” Pages 22-36 in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings*. Ed. Athalya Brenner. 2<sup>nd</sup> series. Translation of “Saul, David, und Jonatan—eine Dreiecksgeschichte? Ein Beitrag zum Thema ‘Homosexualität im Ersten Testament.’” *Bibel und Kirche* 51 (1996): 15-22.
- Schultz, A. *Das zweite Buch Samuel*. Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 8/2. Münster: Aschendorff, 1920.
- Schwartz, Regina. “Adultery in the House of David: The Metanarrative of Biblical Scholarship and the Narratives of the Bible.” *Semeia* 54 (1991): 35-55.



Seeman, Don. "The Watcher at the Window: Cultural Poetics of a Biblical Motif."

*Prooftexts* 24 (2004): 1-50.

Sefati, Yitzhak. *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-*

*Inana Love Songs*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998.

Seiler, Stefan. *Geschichte von der Thronfolge Davids (2 Sam 9-20; 1 Kön 1-2):*

*Untersuchungen zur Literaturkritik und Tendenz*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 267. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998.

Shectman, Sarah. *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist Source-Critical Analysis*.

Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Smend, Rudolf. "The Law and the Nations: A Contribution to Deuteronomistic Tradition

History." Pages 95-111 in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*. Eds. G. N. Knoppers and J. G. McConville.

Translation of "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte." in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Ran zum 70. Geburtstag*. Ed. H. W. Wolff. Munich: Kaiser, 1971.

Smith, Mark S. *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities of Ancient*

*Israel*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids; Dearborn, Mich: Eerdmans; Dove, 2002.

——— *Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004.

——— *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23: Royal Constructions of Opposition, Intersection, Integration, and Domination*. Atlanta: SBL, 2006.

- and Wayne T. Pitard. *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*. Vol 2. *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 114. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Spencer, Patricia. “Dance in Ancient Egypt.” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003): 111-121.
- Stade, Bernhard. *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*. Vol 1. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berlin: G. Grote, 1889.
- Stamm, J. J. “Der Name des Königs Salomo.” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 16 (1960): 285-297.
- Sternberg, Meir. *Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Stoebe, Hans Joachim. “Die Goliathperikope 1 Sam. XVII 1-XVIII 5 und die Textform der Septuaginta.” *Vetus Testamentum* 6 (1956): 397-413.
- *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*. Kommentar zum Alten Testament 8/2. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1994.
- Stolz, Fritz. *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*. Zürcher Bibelkommentare 9. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981.
- Stone, Ken. *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series* 234. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective*. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Streck, Maximilian. *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's*. Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916.

- Thompson, J. A. "The Significance of the Verb Love in the David-Jonathan Narratives in I Samuel." *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 334-38.
- Thompson, Richard J. "The Deuteronomic Covenant and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Ideology: A Study of the Deuteronomistic History in its Historical Context." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2011.
- *Terror of the Radiance: Assur Covenant to YHWH Covenant*. Orbis biblicus et orientalis 258. Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.
- Thompson, Thomas L. *The Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.
- "Israelite Historiography." *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 3: 206-212.
- Thornton, T. C. G. "Solomonic Apologetic in Samuel and Kings." *Church Quarterly Review* 169 (1968): 159-166.
- Tidwell, N. L. "The Linen Ephod." *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 505-507.
- Toorn, Karel van der. "David and the Ark." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994): 209-231.
- Tov, Emmanuel. "The Composition of 1 Samuel 16-18 in the Light of the Septuagint Version." Pages 97-130 in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.
- *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Trebolle, Julio. "The Story of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17-18): Textual Variants and Literary Composition." *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 23 (1990): 16-30.

- Trible Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Overtures to Biblical Theology 2. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.
- *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Tropper, Josef. “Eine altaramäische Steleninschrift aus Dan.” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 25 (1993): 395-406.
- Tsevat, Matitiah. “Marriage and Monarchical Legitimacy in Ugarit and Israel.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 3 (1958): 237-243.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. *The First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Ussishkin, David. “Solomon’s Jerusalem: The Text and the Facts on the Ground.” Pages 103-115 in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*. Eds. A.G. Vaughn and A.E. Killebrew. Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18. Atlanta: SBL, 2003.
- Van Seters, John. *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983.
- “Love and Death in the Court History of David.” Pages 121-124 in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*. Eds. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good. Guilford, Conn.: Four Quarters, 1987.
- “The Court History and DtrH.” Pages 70-93 in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids*. Eds. Albert de Pury and Thomas Römer.
- *The Biblical Saga of King David*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009.

- Veijola, Timo. *Die Ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung*. Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae B 193. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1975.
- Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae B 198. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1977.
- “Salomo—der Erstgeborene Bathsebas.” Pages 230-250 in *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament*. Ed. J. A. Emerton. Vetus Testamentum Supplement 30. Leiden: Brill, 1979.
- Vermeulen, Jacques. *La loi du plus fort: Histoire de la rédaction des récits davidiques de I Samuel à I Rois 2*. Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium 154. Leuven: University Press, 2000.
- Vernus, Pascal. *Chants d'amour de l'Égypte antique: présentation, traduction et notes*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992.
- Voegelin, Erich. *Order and History*. Vol. 1. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2001.
- Ward, Roger L. “The Story of David’s Rise: A Tradition-historical Study of I Samuel xvi 14-II Samuel v.” Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1967.
- Washington, Harold C. “Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach.” *Biblical Interpretation* 5 (1997): 324-363.
- Weems, Renita J. “Missing Jonathan: In a World of Power, Violence, and Ambition, a Friendship That Lasts.” *The Other Side* 33 (1997): 50-55.

- Weidner, E. "Hof-und Harems-Erlasse assyrischer Könige aus dem 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr." *Archiv für Orientforschung* 17 (1954/56): 257-293.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992.
- Weippert, Helga. "Die 'deuteronomistischen' Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher." *Biblica* 53 (1972): 301-39.
- "Der Ort, den Jahwe erwählen wird, um dort seinen Namen wohnen zu lassen: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Formel." *Biblische Zeitschrift* 24 (1980): 76-94.
- "Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk: Sein Ziel und Ende in der neueren Forschung." *Theologische Rundschau* 50 (1985): 213-249.
- Weiser, Artur. "Die Legitimation des Königs David. Zur Eigenart und Entstehung der sogen. Geschichte von Davids Aufstieg." *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (1966): 325-354.
- Wellhausen, Julius. *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*. Trans. J. S. Black and Allan Menzies, with a preface by W. Robertson Smith. 1885. Repr., with a foreword by Douglas A. Knight, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994. Translation of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*. Berlin: Reimer, 1883.
- Die Composition des Hexateuch und der Historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963. Repr. of 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1895. Originally published as vol. 2 of *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*. 6 vols. Berlin: Reimer, 1885.

- Wesselius, J.-W. "The First Royal Inscription from Ancient Israel: The Tel Dan Inscription Reconsidered." *SJOT* 13 (1999): 163-86.
- "The Road to Jezreel: Primary History and The Tel Dan Inscription." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15 (2001): 83-103.
- Westbrook, Raymond, ed. *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- and Bruce Wells, *Everyday Law in Biblical Israel: An Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- White, Ellen. "Michal the Misinterpreted." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31 (2007): 451-464.
- White, John B. *A Study of the Language of Love in the Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Poetry*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 38. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1978.
- Whybray, R. N. *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9-20; 1 Kings 1 and 2*. Studies in Biblical Theology II/9. Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1968.
- Willi-Plein, Ina. "I Sam 18-19 und die Davidshausgeschichte." Pages 138-171 in *David und Saul im Widerstreit—Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit: Beiträge zur Auslegung des ersten Samuelbuches*. Ed. Walter Dietrich. Orbis biblicus et orientalis 206. Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005.
- Wilson, Nancy. *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995.

- Wimmer, Stefan. "Ancient Egyptian Love Songs: Papyrus Harris 500, New Insights into an Old Problem." Pages 25-33 in *The Art of Love Lyrics: In Memory of Bernard Couroyer, OP and Hans Jacob Polotsky, First Egyptologists in Jerusalem*. Cahiers de la revue biblique 49. Ed. Krsysztof Modras. Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie Éditeurs, 2000.
- Wolf, Herbert M. "The Apology of Ḫattušiliš Compared with Other Political Self-Justifications of the Ancient Near East." Ph.D. diss., Brandeis, 1967.
- Wozniak, Jerzy. "Drei verschiedene literarische Beschreibungen des Bundes zwischen Jonathan und David." *Biblische Zeitschrift* 27 (1983): 213-218.
- Wright, David P. "Music and Dance 2 Samuel 6." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 201-225.
- Wright, Rebecca A. *Establishing Hospitality in the Old Testament: Testing the Tool of Linguistic Pragmatics*. Ph.D. diss., Yale University 1989.
- Würthwein, Ernst. *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids—theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* Theologische Studien 115. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974.
- Wyatt, N. *Religious Texts from Ugarit: the Words of Ilimilku and his Colleagues*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998.
- Yadin, Yigael. "Some Aspects of the Strategy of Ahab and David." *Biblica* 36 (1955): 332-351.
- Yee, Gale A. "'Fraught with Background:' Literary Ambiguity in II Samuel 11." *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 240-253.



- Younger, K. L. "Hazeal, Son of a Nobody." Pages 245-270 in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard*. Eds. P. Bienkowski, C. Mee, and E. Slater. New York: T&T Clark, 2005.
- Zehnder, Markus. "Exegetische Beobachtungen zu den David-Jonathan-Geschichten." *Biblica* 79 (1998): 153-179.
- "Observations on the Relationship between David and Jonathan and the Debate on Homosexuality." *Westminster Theological Journal* 69 (2007): 127-174.
- Zevit, Ziony. *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches*. London: Continuum, 2001.
- "Israel's Royal Cult and the Ancient Near Eastern *Kulturkreis*." Pages 189-200 in *Text, Artifact, and Image*. Eds. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Erin E. Fleming was born on September 6, 1980 in Dallas, Texas. She graduated *summa cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts in English and history from Texas A&M University in 2003 and with a Master of Divinity specializing in Hebrew Bible from Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York in 2007, after which she began work toward a Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. She has taught at the Johns Hopkins University, the Baltimore Hebrew Institute at Towson University, and the Poverty Initiative at Union Theological Seminary.